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CHRISTIAN COURIER
A Reformed Weekly

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SEP 17 1998
CHRISTIAN COURIER
PER/BX/9401/.C36

54th September 11, 1998 No. 2589 $1.07

The Bible makes it into China ... legally or illegally

Alan Doerksen

BURLINGTON, Ont. — Despite increasing persecution of Christians in China, the underground church there is growing at a rate of 25,000 people a week, says Rev. David Tigchelaar. As executive director of The Bible League-Canada, he visited China and Vietnam in June and witnessed evidence of the church's growth in both countries.

Each week, the Bible League's partners in Hong Kong smuggle 3,000 Bibles across the border which still exists between Hong Kong and mainland China, says Tigchelaar. But sometimes this is difficult to do.

Flying into Hong Kong, Tigchelaar and five colleagues planned to smuggle some Bibles into the Chinese city of Shenzhen. Each person carried three suitcases holding 60 Bibles. Since Tigchelaar and his colleagues were all Westerners, they stood in separate line-ups so as not to stand out. Customs officers at the border were scanning some suitcases to check the contents.

As Tigchelaar crossed the border, a Chinese woman asked him if he was carrying books. "Yes," he said. "Bibles?" "Yes."

"I wouldn't lie," asserts Tigchelaar. But he notes, "We would not step forward to give a declaration [about carrying Bibles] unless asked."

"Of the six who were carrying Bibles, five got caught with them," says Tigchelaar, who admits this was "very disappointing.... Someone had traveled 1,200 km to pick up these Scriptures."

'God-ordained moment'

The Bibles were confiscated at the border, but Tigchelaar and his colleagues were able to pick them up on their return to Hong Kong. Later on, the group flew to Beijing, again bringing the Bibles with them.

This time, Tigchelaar encountered a customs officer who picked up his luggage and noticed the heaviness of a suitcase which held Bibles. But giving him a knowing smile, she took the luggage and said nothing. He believes the woman was a Christian, and calls this "a God-ordained moment."

"All of us got our Scriptures through to Beijing," he says, with satisfaction. "The Bibles ended up in Mongolia."

COURTESY THE BIBLE LEAGUE CANADA

An overflow crowd of worshipers at the registered Three-Self church in Beijing.

But Tigchelaar stayed mostly in the Beijing area, meeting with Chinese underground church leaders. Such meetings had to be carefully arranged. Those involved would meet on buses and would travel from location to location. At other times, they would meet in the hotel where Tigchelaar was staying.

Tigchelaar was inspired by the Chinese church leaders he met and learned from them some reasons why the church is growing so quickly in China. John and Jennifer

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CRC lawsuit accuses IRM of fraud

Darrell Todd Maurina and Marian Van Til

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — On August 31, three Christian Reformed Church agencies, a group of 20 individual investors and the Barnabas Foundation appeared before the U.S. Bankruptcy Court to ask for the removal of the current management of IRM Corporation and their replacement with a court-appointed trustee.

The suit came after three CRC agencies and over 1,500 individual and institutional investors learned last October that they were at risk of losing $228 million of investments in IRM, a network of 130 California real estate partnerships.

The church did not fare particularly well in court. A CRC proposal for "shortened time," so that the issue could be dealt immediately, was rejected by the judge. (The matter will come up again in late September.)

Nor was a bankruptcy trustee appointed. In a closed-door meeting, the court approved the election of an 11-member investors committee which will provide key advice to the court on the reorganization and final disposition of the assets of IRM Corporation. The committee will have only one CRC agency representative and one Barnabas representative. This issue was a serious area of contention on the first committee, and had led to a deadlock in discussions of the issue.

Losing the PR battle

Retired Grand Rapids, Mich., businessman Jay Mol, and John Vanni, are, respectively, chairperson and secretary of the new investors committee. They are also part of a group calling itself the "Concerned IRM Investors," all but two of whom are Christian Reformed. That group has been severely critical of the actions of CRC agencies with regard to IRM, accusing the church of "rationalizations, misunderstandings, and/or misrepresentations."

In addition to Mol and Vanni, the new IRM investors committee members include Ken Horjus, CRC director of finance and administration, representing the Christian Reformed agencies; Barnabas Foundation executive director David Vander Ploeg; "Concerned Investors" Frank Deppe and Marvin Helder; and California businessman Henry Conversano. Additional members are Art Den Dulk, Fred LeFebre, Phil Wiltjer and Dirk Mellema.All committee members except Vanni and Conversano are members of the CRC.

According to sources familiar with the court proceedings but not formally affiliated with either the Concerned Investors or the Christian Reformed agencies, the CRC won't have

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News

Spiritual hunger growing in China

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(not their real names) are the leaders of an underground church two hours from Beijing.

"John and Jennifer had been fingered by the police," explains Tigchelaar. "They were on the run and could not return to their home" — they would be arrested. John had already been arrested four times.

"I said to Jennifer, 'Are you ever afraid?'" relates Tigchelaar. "She looked at me and said, Yes, I'm afraid.... When I'm afraid, I sing.'" At which point, she sang Psalm 42. On another occasion, Tigchelaar met a woman who is known as "the Fanny Crosby of China" because she has written 543 hymns.

Tigchelaar also met Brother Daniel, who gave three reasons for rapid church growth in China. "The church in China pays much attention to the cross of Jesus Christ," he told Tigchelaar. "When we preach Jesus, people come, hear and obey."

Secondly, the Chinese church understands suffering. "To know suffering is to know the blessing of Jesus."

Third, said Brother Daniel, "The church is the protector of Christ's people." This means that Christians "look out for one another, explains Tigchelaar. "When one leader is arrested, there's another one to replace him."

Many church leaders in China are intellectuals, observes Tigchelaar. Several he met with were fluent in English.

He says the underground church alone in China is growing at a rate of 25,000 people a week. And that is a conservative estimate.

Church growth worries government

Church leaders told Tigchelaar that the Chinese government is worried about rapid growth of the church. "In China, the government is recognizing the hunger of the human heart." He points out that in formerly communist countries such as Romania, "the ultimate fall of the government had to do with spiritual power." Therefore, he says, Chinese government leaders may have concluded that "as the church grows, their days may be numbered."

In Beijing, Tigchelaar also went to a Three-Self church, part of the officially sanctioned church in China. The sanctuary sat 1,200, and a basement held an overflow crowd of 1,400. More worshippers gathered outside the church, bringing the total to about 5,000.

In the Three-Self church, "the pastors are government-appointed," explains Tigchelaar. "Anyone who's a member of the registered church is registered with the government. The government provides for Bibles to be printed for the registered people."

The Chinese government pays for Bibles to be printed by Amity Press, based in the city of Nanjing. Amity says it prints as many as three million Bibles a year, but Tigchelaar says the underground church estimates that Amity has printed only 17 million in the past 20 years.

Those numbers don't come anywhere near to meeting the demand for Bibles in China, Tigchelaar asserts. But he acknowledges that the Amity Bibles are still Bibles, even though they are controlled by China's government.

Because of the great need, The Bible League has been working for several years to get Bibles and other Christian literature into China, and to train Chinese church leaders.

"We're undoubtedly the largest provider of Scriptures and training in China," says Tigchelaar. The Bible League has produced a study Bible called the "Fish Bible" for Chinese church leaders. It contains 52 suggested sermon themes with outlines, as well as biblical maps.

While in Beijing, Tigchelaar and his colleagues made a video, which was difficult to do there. "We started in Tiananmen Square," he says. "There were police around us frequently, observing, monitoring." He himself didn't notice undercover police officers, but a Chinese helper watched The Bible League workers from a distance, and told Tigchelaar later that several times he had observed the police observing The Bible League representatives.

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Court case biblically justifiable

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an easy time with the new committee.

According to one large IRM investor, during the meeting which selected the investors committee, a number of investors applauded when negative comments were said about the actions of the Christian Reformed Church.

Speaking on condition of anonymity, a Christian Reformed minister sympathetic to the position of the agencies expressed concern that IRM was "winning the public relations battle" and that the CRC position wasn't being adequately presented to the court and the public.

Appeals to Matthew 18

Initially, when news of IRM troubles broke, virtually everyone wanted a private settlement that would keep the case out of bankruptcy court. At one point there was an attempt by retired Back to God Hour broadcast minister Dr. Joel Nederhood to mediate between the parties, including a July 23 letter drafted by IRM with Nederhood's help asking the CRC board of trustees to "implore the agencies to dismiss the lawsuit."

That hasn't happened. But CRC general secretary Dr. David Engelhard told *Christian Courier* that the CRC board of trustees believes its going to court is biblically justifiable.

The CRC lawsuit is not based on gain for the church, says Engelhard. "They're not trying to 'take' a fellow believer for all he or she is worth. The board [of trustees of the CRC] was seeking the *protection* of the courts rather than seeking gain."

But David Buurma, senior vice president of client services for IRM, abhors the suit. "If you have a problem with a brother, Matthew 18 requires you talk to him about it," said Buurma. He insists "they have never brought accusations to us prior to the lawsuit, they have never brought concerns to us, asked why we did what we did. I just don't know how you dodge Matthew 18, and 1 Corinthians 6 says pretty clearly you don't sue other Christians. It seems to me they should be talking to our church councils."

For the church's part, however, Engelhard explains that after much discussion resulting in apparently unresolvable disagreement, "the creditors' committee was no longer making headway, and it didn't seem right for IRM to be in the driver's seat [due to conflict of interest], so the thinking was that an objective third party [a bankruptcy trustee] was necessary."

Normal Chapter 11 procedures call for the U.S. Bankruptcy Court to appoint two committees of unsecured creditors and investors to represent their interests in the reorganization process.

Vietnamese Christians severely persecuted

Alan Doerksen

BURLINGTON, Ont. — Persecution of Christians in Vietnam is more severe than in China, asserts Rev. David Tigchelaar, executive director of The Bible League-Canada. Because of the danger and restriction faced by Christians in Vietnam, Tigchelaar and his colleagues had to be very careful about meeting local church leaders when visiting Vietnam in June.

"We were not allowed to meet with Christians outside of a church building. We were not allowed to meet with them privately," he says, explaining government restrictions.

But Tigchelaar and his colleagues managed to arrange several secret meetings. "We met with 18 of our church planters in a hotel setting. We met to eat with them and hear their testimonies. Somebody alerted the police to the fact, [but] we were gone by then," he explains.

Heavy fines

But another group of Bible League staffers meeting in Ho Chi Minh City was not so fortunate. The police burst into that meeting, arrested a Bible League pastor, interrogated him for 12 hours and took away his passport. Later, his passport was returned but he was fined $500 (US) because he had broken government regulations about meeting with Christians. And a Vietnamese pastor and the local hosts of the meeting were each fined $300 (US). These are hefty amounts — in Vietnam, explains Tigchelaar, "the average salary is $30 (US) a month."

COURTESY THE BIBLE LEAGUE-CANADA

Rev. David Tigchelaar at a Vietnamese underground church.

Tigchelaar had a chance to worship at a church that met at a cashew farm, in the home of a Vietnamese Christian woman. About 80 worshipers crowded into one room, which opened up to the fresh air like a patio. "It was a wonderful experience," he says.

The Bible League has just begun working in Vietnam but already claims to be the largest provider of Bibles to that country. In addition, local representatives of The Bible League provide training to Vietnamese church planters.

The Bible League has been at work for more than 50 years and now places Bibles in more than 70 countries.

Four lawsuits launched against IRM

Darrell Todd Maurina and Marian Van Til

SACRAMENTO, Cal. — On July 16, Christian Reformed Home Missions, the Back to God Hour, Calvin College, the Barnabas Foundation and 20 individual investors petitioned the Contra Costa County (California) Superior Court to place IRM in receivership and to place the personal assets of the IRM principals and their family members in a "constructive trust" for the benefit of the plaintiffs.

On August 4, Mechanic's Bank in California demanded immediate repayment of a $1.5 million line of credit to IRM and asked for the appointment of its own receiver at a hearing scheduled for August 7.

A separate lawsuit by a group of Michigan investors was also scheduled to be heard on August 7 but was placed on hold because of the bankruptcy petition. In addition, IRM said that several first mortgage holders indicated that if the Contra Costa court placed IRM in receivership, they would foreclose on their matured loans.

Investors defrauded

The trust the CRC agencies once placed in the IRM officials broke down, and the lawsuit cites serious objections to IRM management. "Given the current impasse between IRM and the Committee of IRM creditors and investors and the fact that the IRM principals have fraudulently managed IRM and IRM-related entities, it is imperative that IRM and all IRM-related entities be restrained from attempting to sell or transfer IRM assets or to dispose of or alter any IRM documents; and that a receiver be immediately appointed to preside over the management of IRM," the CRC lawsuit alleges.

The lawsuit asserts that since 1991, IRM officers "have engaged in a Ponzi-like scheme," legally defined as "a fraudulent arrangement in which an entity makes payments to investors from moneys obtained from later investors rather than from any profits of the underlying business venture."

Citing an audit by Price Waterhouse-Coopers stating that "it appears that IRM management have created and perpetuated a real estate investment pyramid scheme" using "investor money which could only be sustained through continued and ever expanding loans from new and existing investors," the suit argued that "irreparable harm" would occur unless current IRM management is restrained from further management of the IRM assets.

In an August 7 letter to investors, IRM blamed its decision to declare bankruptcy on four legal actions filed against IRM.

An affidavit by Ken Horjus, CRC finance director and chair of the creditors committee, is even more specific:

"Many of the investors in the various IRM-related entities are elderly people who invested their life savings in IRM based on IRM's representations that their money would be secured against real property," wrote Horjus. "In fact many of the investments are completely unsecured or under-secured and in some cases IRM failed to record deeds of trust reflecting the investment or recorded the deeds of trust in an improper order of priority."

Horjus' affidavit continued: "IRM has created a completely unsustainable enterprise and defrauded investors of over $100 million, accumulating investment interest and debt in this scheme of nearly $400 million — while the properties as a whole are worth only $270 million or less.

"The control of the properties and funds by a neutral receiver is the only avenue available to ensure the IRM enterprise is handled appropriately. IRM's fiduciary breach and fraud has been so massive that IRM must not continue to have any control over the properties, the partnerships or the investments."

'Excessive compensation'

The lawsuit also alleged excessive compensation and capital distribution payments to five IRM principals, ranging from $1,066,723 to $1,531,019 during the period of January 1, 1995, to October 15, 1997.

The CRC alleged "that under the financially distressed circumstances in which the equity partnerships found themselves at such time, that such compensation was unreasonably excessive and that the distributions of capital were not prudent nor in the best interests of the equity partnerships."

According to the lawsuit, IRM broke an agreement with the creditors committee by initiating a sale proposal to Eenhoorn, a Grand Rapids-based management firm that offered to pay five cents on the dollar for the assets of IRM and deferred payments in subsequent years from the profits of the corporation.

The Eenhoorn offer includes provisions to pay $2.8 million to the IRM principals and indemnify them against legal claims arising from IRM management issues; both were criticized by the lawsuit as inappropriate.

The maple leaf forever?

Principalities & Powers

David T. Koyzis

Virtually all countries have their own distinctive flags that are symbols not only of sovereignty but of the traditions of a particular political community. Yet not all flags are equally capable of unifying such a community.

In 1960 the British colony of Cyprus became an independent republic, complete with all the usual accoutrements of nationhood, including a new flag. Few Cypriots had desired independence. Most Greek Cypriots had wanted their island annexed to Greece, while Turkish Cypriots preferred either continued British rule or division of the island. Independence came as the result of a compromise among Britain, Greece and Turkey.

Creating symbol out of nothing

The new flag was remarkable for containing none of the symbolism associated with either ethnic community. There was to be no Turkish crescent, no Greek cross and stripes, no Byzantine double-headed eagle. Because these symbols were deemed divisive, they were to be left out altogether. Instead the new flag consisted of a gold filled outline of the map of Cyprus, set on a white field and flanked by two palm branches, expressing a hope for peace in the island.

The attempt to create a unifying symbol out of nothing was unsuccessful. During a visit to Cyprus three years ago, I was struck by the presence in many places of the Greek flag, especially on the grounds of churches and monasteries. We did occasionally see the Cypriot flag flying, but it was frequently paired with the flag of Greece, as, for example, in Nicosia, where Ledra Street comes to an abrupt and premature end at the notorious Green Line separating the Turkish north from the Greek south.

Meaningful only to some

Needless to say, the Cypriot flag does not fly at all in the north part of the island. The so-called Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) has created its own flag, a modification of that of Turkey itself. At the guard towers just north of the Green Line, the flags of both Turkey and the TRNC fly in tandem.

Five years after Cypriot independence, Canada adopted its current flag. Prior to then Canada had used either the Union Jack, which it shared with the United Kingdom, or one of a series of Red Ensigns containing the Union Jack in the corner. Because of associations with British colonial rule, neither of these flags could appeal to the sentiments of French Canadians, who still carried long memories of the conquest of 1759.

The new flag carried as its chief symbol a red maple leaf, thought to carry no divisive connotations. The intention was clearly to create a new symbol that would effectively unify Canadians across the old French-English divide. All symbols associated with either of the two linguistic communities were to be kept off the new national standard.

Even the fleur-de-lis of Nouvelle France, which had found its way into the Canadian coat of arms and, thus, into the old Red Ensign, was to be denied a place.

Once again Canada's maple leaf flag has been only partly successful in bridging the linguistic divide. It is quite recognizable overseas, and everyone there views it as quintessentially Canadian. But with the exception of federal government buildings, to fly it in Quebec is generally interpreted as making a political statement that most Quebeckers, even federalists, would for the most part prefer not to make.

Neither the Cypriot nor the Canadian flags have been altogether successful in transcending their identification with only a part of the total national community. The attempt to create national symbols by no means guarantees that they will succeed in functioning as such, particularly if they neglect existing symbols already commanding some popular allegiance.

David T. Koyzis teaches political science at Redeemer College, Ancaster, Ontario, where a new departmental web page has recently been posted (http://www.redeemer.on.ca/academics/polisci/).

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Editorial

Letters from a senior to a junior editor (1)

Next June, the Lord willing, I will retire from my position as editor of *Christian Courier*. To some it may seem arbitrary that I select my 65th birthday as the time to withdraw from the formal economy and from the task of Christian journalism, but to me this date offers opportunities for new challenges without deadlines and accountability.

Besides, I believe it's time that someone younger than I take the paper into the next century. I am a man of my time, a time which includes spending my boyhood in occupied Holland during World War II and going through an immigration in my mid-adolescence. It's a time when Reformed Dutch immigrants built churches and Christians schools and started a variety of Christian organizations. It's also a time that saw an information explosion, growth of corporate structures, increasing mechanization and a tremendous change in public ethics and morality, church attendance and worship patterns — to touch on just a few radical changes. Many of these changes I have ridden bravely like a latter-day surfer. Some of these changes threaten to swamp me.

But before I withdraw, I intend to write 10 editorials of a very special kind, editorials in which I address the next editor, whoever that will be, on topics that I deem important for the next generation. There will be one appearing near the beginning of each month, until number 10 appears, perhaps, on my 65th birthday, Friday, June 11, 1999.

The literary model I have chosen for addressing the future editor of *Christian Courier* is the *Screwtape Letters* by C.S. Lewis. They were letters from a senior to a junior devil. But since the work we at CC seek to promote serves the cause of Screwtape's Enemy, Jesus Christ, I decided to resort to terminology and messages that are antithetical to those of Screwtape's.

Of course, Lewis himself was on our side, as he made generous use of irony to get his point across that we mortals are in danger of being led astray by devious forces parading as benign influences. But since irony is not a strong suit with most Christians (I don't want to count the times that irony has landed me in trouble), I am reluctantly resorting to straight talk, in which good is good, and evil, evil, and in which even my name and that of the new editor suggest the cause both of us espouse.

BW

My dear Wordgood:

Congratulations on your appointment to the editorship of *Christian Courier*. Since by next summer I will lay down the pen, which some say is mightier than the sword (is the word processor mightier than the missile?), I thought it prudent to write you once a month until your appointment becomes effective, so that you can be the more enlightened about the ink battle I have been engaged in for 17 years. May your call into action last as long or longer.

The purpose of my letters is to prepare you for the task ahead and to warn you against those spirits present in our society which have enlisted in the service of our great enemy — Lucifer. You were a bit reluctant to be the recipient of these letters because, as you so clearly reminded me the last time we met, your generation does not take kindly to advice from my generation. You and your peers do not think we did such a good job of looking after the environment, for example, and you consider us materialistic, wasteful and hypocritical.

I must commend you on your accurate assessment of my generation. I have met several people my age who seem to consider retirement a foretaste of heaven. They seem totally self-absorbed and self-serving as they settle into a lifestyle that equates happiness with security, health and comfort. They act as if they were here to stay; as if death, rather than Lucifer, were the great enemy. Every single one of them performs a few hours of volunteer service to soothe their consciences.

As I approach retirement, I am at times greatly tempted by similar notions, and wonder if I have not made a serious mistake during my economically most productive years, focusing on service rather than on making money.

But before I completely discourage you, my dear Wordgood, and feed into your generation's cynicism, let me assure you that there are thousands among my peers who have not bowed their knees to the consumer gods of our time and who, instead, have practised the "lilies-of-the-field" philosophy. They have sought and continue to seek first the Kingdom of Heaven, even into retirement, when the natural grinders are few and those looking out the windows grow dim even with prescription glasses. These faithful ones don't worry about food and clothing as do the pagans.

All the same, materialism is indeed one of the greatest threats to the Church of Jesus Christ. No matter what communities do to revitalize spiritual life in their midst, as long as they allow themselves to be sucked in by the demands of a consumer society, their religion will be mere salad dressing and their prayers, cartoon balloons.

Don't worry, be happy

I don't know whether your generation will be able to practise materialism to the extent that my generation has, but I do think that you will have to combat a related enemy. I'm talking about the enemy Hedonism.

Hedonism is the relentless pursuit of happiness. Serving this idol can be done through focusing on possessions and power, as my generation has done; but it can also be done through endlessly chasing after entertainment, travel, soft drugs, sex and other TGIF activities. All these are equally effective in shutting down the pursuit of God's will, partly because they suck up all your resources — time, money and energy — and partly because they divert attention from asking the deeper questions of life and from committing yourself to a life of full discipleship.

I foresee that Hedonism will remain the scourge of future generations, so that they will not know the meaning of sacrificial living. St. Paul predicted this cozy relationship to Hedonism when he wrote to Timothy that there "will be godlessness in the last days" and that people will be "lovers of themselves, lovers of money, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God."

Keep your eye on Hedonism, Wordgood. He's a sneaky one.

Affectionately yours,
Truetype

Christian Courier

Formerly known as Calvinist Contact
Founded in 1945

An independent weekly that seeks to:
- *report on significant events in the Christian community and the world;*
- *express opinions infused by Scripture and rooted in a Reformed perspective;*
- *provide contact for the Christian community.*

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It's not enough to have compassion

I have appreciated all of Michael Geisterfer's numerous submissions to C.C. over the years, and am impressed with the sensitive, caring, concerned way in which he writes. His articles have sometimes moved me to tears, and his compassion for all of us fallen creatures is obvious. His letter titled "No healing necessary" (Aug. 28) is no exception, and is also filled with that same sensitivity.

I would, however, like to use a few analogies and comparisons to demonstrate that compassion alone is not enough when we are dealing with sinful human beings — and it is assumed, of course, that we all fall under the category of "sinful human beings."

Michael talks about having compassion for those who take part in homosexual practices, to be accepting of them, and to share in their hurt. It all sounds very biblical. But, because we love and care for homosexuals, should we give in to our feelings of compassion and accept their sinful lifestyle?

Where is the remedy?

As a father, I have very strong, conflicting feelings when I discipline my children. I detest disciplining my children. But what is more compassionate: to allow them to continue in their sinful behavior because it makes me feel better, or to raise and nurture them according to God's standards?

Michael suggests that, in fact, (ex-gay testimonials) illustrate the power of the conscious mind to suppress information that cannot be properly digested, often because the outer environment is simply too hostile." That statement could be true. It is probably an accurate description of what is going on in the mind of a struggling homosexual. But, is such a statement helpful?

Here is another analogy: I place my hand into a boiling pot of water. There is a doctor with me, and he is describing to me what is happening to my hand. He says "your hand is beginning to blister. It's turning red. You are screaming. Your blood pressure is going up." He is not being very helpful. But, he is giving me an accurate *medical description* of what is taking place.

In the same way, Michael gives an accurate *psychological description* of what is taking place in a homosexual's life. What is more helpful, though? A description of the pain, or a remedy? A good doctor would not be content with just a description of the pain. A good doctor would also prescribe a remedy, namely: "Take you hand out of the boiling water." Michael *describes* a homosexual's pain, but offers no biblical remedy.

Deceitful heart

Michael also writes, "If (homosexuals) were taught that Jesus loves them precisely as they are, they wouldn't feel the need to deny their natural, God-given sexual orientation."

I had a close friend whose "natural God-given (?) sexual orientation" was to have sex with someone other than his wife. So, he committed adultery and left a wife and two young children in devastation. His sin is against me and all who loved him, but it is mainly sin against God ("against you, and you only have I sinned, and done what is evil in your sight" Ps. 51:4).

I also have a "natural God-given (?!) sexual orientation like my friend's ("The heart is deceitful above all things, and beyond cure, who can understand it?" Jer. 17:9). Yet why don't I follow through on those "natural desires"? (See Eph. 4:22-24). Does God not say adultery is an abomination in his sight? Then, what about homosexual practices? How can adultery be sinful, and not homosexual practices?

Finally, Michael ends his letter with "God's love is unconditional. He loves us precisely as we are." Who can deny that statement? However, that is not where we start out on our road of faith, but, rather, that is where we finish.

I cannot utter those words unless I see the depravity and disgusting nature of my own life. Only then can we sigh with relief and say, "He loves us as we are."

Ken Versluis
Chatham, Ont.

Sanctification starts now

In response to Michael Geisterfer's contention that "no healing is necessary" for gays simply because, "God loves us precisely as we are," I would suggest that at rock-bottom, Michael is not noting the difference between justification and sanctification.

God loves us so much that he accepts us just as we are (justification), but he loves us *too* much to leave us as we are (sanctification). The road towards healing, be it [of] homosexuality, or any other sinful lifestyle, begins (if I read my Bible correctly) this side of heaven. The Holy Spirit isn't on vacation waiting for the day he can finally do something when Christ returns! He wants to apply Christ's victory to our lives in the here and now.

Besides, Michael undermines Reformed theology right at its roots by failing to see that God's norms are rooted in Creation, not in the Fall. To speak of two or more "God-given" orientations is to suggest that homosexuality is the way things are supposed to be. It is to suggest that God had it as part of his original blueprint for his good creation.

I believe we brought the Fall (and homosexuality, etc.) upon ourselves. I'm not quite prepared to blame God for creating us "oriented toward sin," nor am I ready to accuse the devil for having made me do it.

But then, maybe I shouldn't speak too quickly. Who knows: we've always been good at shifting the blame, haven't we?

"The woman you put here with me — she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it!" Maybe I shift the blame too. It's in my blood.

Art Verboon
Edmonton

Observe simple Kingdom rules

The article on the VanderBeek family and other graduates from the seminary is a sad commentary on our society and our churches. Maybe the VanderBeeks are partly to blame for their situation, but so are the churches.

As a Christian Reformed community we have always maintained that ministers, and that should include those who are studying for the ministry, must be paid an adequate salary. A pastor should not have to look over his shoulder at his own temporal needs while serving the spiritual needs of his/her congregation.

The churches should have looked after the VanderBeeks while they prepared for the ministry. Since the Forest (Ont.) CRC called Rev. VanderBeek, they are now obligated to take care of the temporal comfort of their pastor. If they find the burden too great, it is their duty to seek the help of the neighboring churches who are obligated to assist them. That way we can all help to undo the errors that were made in the past. If we do this, our God will meet all our needs (Philippians 4).

If we as congregations of the Christian Reformed denomination cannot reflect those simple kingdom rules in our own family, there is not much use going to the world with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Our witness in this materialistic world must come from people who know how to bring a "fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God." Otherwise the gospel we bring may smell a little, and [how we smell] is the only reality that counts.

John Lutgendorff
Brampton, Ont

Column headline was unfortunate

The headline "Unmarried cohabitation is no laughing matter" [on the August 21 letter by Lammert Slofstra, in reference to the "2 over 65" exchange of July 31] was (in my judgment) a most unfortunate editorial choice. I never said it was. And my lovable co-author Mary V. doesn't think so either. So read my words, Lammert Slofstra and CC editors.

Adrian Peetoom
Waterloo, Ont.

Christian Courier

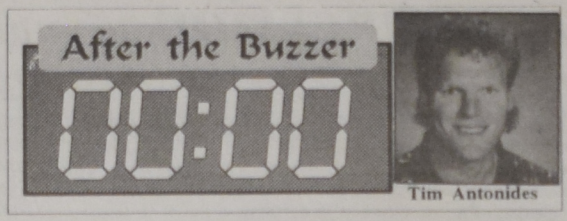
Member of Canadian Church Press and Evangelical Press Association.
Canada mail: Publications Mail Registration No. 0451. Postage paid at St. Catharines, Ont. Postmaster: send address changes to Christian Courier, 4-261 Martindale Rd. St,. Catharines, Ont. L2W 1A1.
U.S. mail: Christian Courier (USPS 518-090). Second-class postage paide at Lewiston, NY. Postmaster: send address changes to Christian Courier, Box 110, Lewiston, NY, 14092.

Subscriptions:	**Canada**	**U.S.A.**
(effective Feb. 1, 1995)	(GST incl.)	(GST free)
one year (44 issues)	$43.50	$35.00 U.S.
two years (88 issues)	$82.00	$66.00 U.S.
three years (132 issues)	$123.00	$99.00 U.S.
overseas one year	$135 airmail	$85.00 surface mail

Advertising deadlines: display advertising: Wednesday, 8:30 a.m.; classified advertising: Thursday, 8:30 a.m. All deadlines are for the following week's issue. See classified pages for more details. Advertising rate sheets available.
(ISSN 1192-3415) Published weekly on Fridays except for Feb. 27. April 10, June 12, July 10, Aug. 14, Oct. 2, Nov. 27, and Dec. 25.
Address all correspondence to: 4-261 Martindale Rd. St,. Catharines, Ont. L2W 1A1, Tel: 905-682-8311 or fax: 905-682-8313, e-mail: subscriptions: ccsubscrip@aol.com, advertising: ccadverts@aol.com
PRINTED IN CANADA

Sports

'Hockey Night in Canada' — or only in Ontario?



Tim Antonides

Right now, I'm sitting at a window in my father-in-law and mother-in-law's house in Thornburry, Ont. Panning from left to right, I see groves of beautiful trees and rolling green hills that wind their way into the sparkling waters of Georgian Bay. The air is warm and humid. The birds are chirping.

Ah, Ontario! Among other things, this is hockey country, folks. Allow me to enrich the context of this column further. I come from a hockey wasteland, at least as far as professional hockey goes. We in B.C. lost interest in the Vancouver Canucks years ago, due in part to the fact that they hop from coach to coach and player to player with the frequency of a ham radio. You want real hockey spirit and true hockey culture? Go East, young man (or woman)!

These are not easy words for me to write. I love my Pacific homeland. After talking to my brother-in-law Jason and observing the professional hockey landscape over the years, though, my fears have been confirmed. When it comes to hockey, Toronto Maple Leafs fans (in particular) are hard to beat.

Ontario breeds true fans

Down-home, staunch, loyal, devout hockey fans are bred here. Despite the fact that the Leafs have been playing lousy hockey and bumbling their way through the NHL for a good part of the century, the people here lack the fickleness and wishy-washy bandwagon jumping that seem to characterize much of the hockey world today.

I try to catch at least one game a year in Vancouver when the Leafs come to town. I don't go because I want to see good hockey. It's the entertainment in the crowd I enjoy. It feels and sounds like there are more Leafs fans than Canucks fans. It seems like every Ontario transplant who lives in Vancouver has come to the game. When the Leafs score, the place goes nuts. The blue and white banners are all over.

Here we are in Ontario. What a breath of fresh air to be in a place where people don't mess around with their loyalties! I'm not entirely sure what single factor causes this. For one, hockey has been around here forever. It's played everywhere and by almost everyone. The historical roots of the game are rich. Toronto was one of the original teams that began in the NHL. For decades, parents have taken their kids to the "Gardens" for a Leafs game. Apparently, it's not the greatest place to watch a game (it's falling apart and the views of the game aren't always good). That doesn't matter; the place is constantly sold-out.

Loyalty and real enjoyment

To me, this is what sports is all about. Hockey fanaticism to the point of religious fervor is one thing, but that isn't necessarily what Leafs fans are into. What I like is that people here support a team no matter what the circumstances and enjoy the game for the game's sake. I'm not saying they're a bunch of good little boys and girls who believe that "winning doesn't matter, as long as you play your best." Of course they want to win, but they'll keep watching and coming to the games, regardless.

Professional hockey Leafs-style has fallen prey to much of the greed and commercial absurdity of our age. What hasn't been lost, though, is a good measure of allegiance and loyalty. In this respect, it has at least some degree of normativity in the messy, depraved business of professional sports.

Tim Antonides teachs Grade 5 and coaches basketball at Surrey Christian School, Surrey, B.C.

NFL security division asked to investigate Christian group

AUSTIN, Tex. (EP) — The security arm of the National Football League has been asked by at least two teams — the Chicago Bears and the Jacksonville Jaguars — to investigate Champions for Christ, a Christian athletic ministry. Team executives told the *New York Times* they are concerned that the group may be recruiting high-profile athletes as a way of raising money.

The Bears also say holdout running back Curtis Enis complicated contract negotiations by switching to an agent who is a friend of members of the ministry. About 10 members of the Bears belong to Champions for Christ. Defensive end Mark Thomas said of the group, "They don't care about Curtis' money. They just care that Curtis is walking with God."

Team executives insisted that the request for an investigation was not an attempt to interfere with the religious beliefs of players, but was motivated by a concern that players could be taken advantage of financially.

Aiming to be 'champions of character'

Champions for Christ was founded in Austin, Texas, in 1985 and is primarily made up of athletes, including A.C. Green of the Dallas Mavericks, who is a vice president of the group, and Washington Redskins cornerback Darrell Green, who is a board member.

Dave Jamerson, a spokesperson for the ministry, said the original goal of the ministry was to "minister to athletes and train them and disciple them, and then they can really step out and be champions — not just in their sports, but be champions for Christ. The idea was that men would not just have three Superbowl rings and a personal life that was a failure, but would be champions in their character."

Jamerson added, "Our sole mission is to communicate the gospel of Jesus Christ to the athletic world and to raise up Christian leadership."

From kids to pros

About one-third of the ministry's work is with professional athletes. Another third is with college athletes from all sports, and the final third involves sports camps for boys and girls. The ministry sponsors conferences for professional athletes and conducts regular Bible studies for athletes in some cities.

In Jacksonville, quarterback Mark Brunell began an evangelistic Bible study with the help of Champions for Christ. "Mark is on the inside so he sees the immorality, the despair, where men are really at," said Jamerson. "He has a heart to reach his teammates so he started a Bible study in his house. It ended up with eight guys getting saved."

Misplaced concern

Jamerson said he's heard from people who believe the NFL's concern is misplaced. "They're saying, 'Why doesn't the NFL investigate the frivolous spending on prostitution and immorality and other things?' That's probably more of a concern than a guy wanting to live for Christ and be committed to his wife."

Jamerson emphasized that Champions for Christ doesn't involve itself in player contract negotiations, and requires no financial commitment from its members. "If an athlete wants to give his time, resources or money to Champions for Christ — praise God!" he added.

Voortman

Over 40 Varieties of Fine Cookies

Blue Jays farm team sued for church bulletin promo

HAGERSTOWN, Md. (EP) — The American Civil Liberties union has filed a lawsuit to challenge a promotion by the Hagerstown Suns, a farm team for the Toronto Blue Jays.

The team offers discounted tickets to families who bring a church bulletin to the box office.

An ACLU attorney said, "What the Suns are doing violates both state and federal anti-discrimination provisions and we hope they will agree to resolve the issue."

Atheist Carl Silverman brought the case to the ACLU because he had to pay full price for his ticket. The team held a "Faith Community Night" Aug. 17 to raise money to defend the promotion in court.

Team spokesperson Mike Heckman said, "We are not promoting any certain religion. We are just trying to get people into the ballpark."

For our Calendar of Events, please turn to page 19

Film Review

As a movie, *Madeline* never gets out of line

Marian Van Til

Madeline

Stars Frances McDormand, Hatty Jones, Nigel Hawthorne. Screenplay by Mark Levin and Jennifer Flackett. Directed by Diane von Scherler Mayer.

Madeline is one of 12 little girls who attend a boarding school in Paris headed by Miss Clavel, a kindly, engergetic Catholic nun (Frances McDormond).

The school is funded by Lady Covington, an Englishwoman who attended the school herself as a girl and who is now ill and dying.

Madeline stands out. She is mischievous, inventive and tends to get herself (and sometimes her schoolmates) in trouble. She is the only one of the 12 girls who has no family, a tenuous situation should anything ever happen to Miss Clavel or the school.

Though feisty, Madeline's really a good girl — not *so* mischievous as to be truly irritating, except to the brusque Lord Covington (Nigel Hawthorne). After his dear wife's untimely death, and much to the chagrin of Miss Clavel and all the girls, Lord "Cuckoo-Face," as they secretly call him, begins trying to sell the estate which houses the school.

That being the case, Madeline and friends — including the son of the Spanish ambassador who lives in the stately house next door — of course try to thwart the plan. Of course, that works eventually, but only after the astute and somewhat lonely Madeline comes to understand that adults' bad behavior sometimes arises from pain, and that Lord Covington's wanting to be rid of the house has arisen from the pain of memory and loneliness.

Hatty Jones as Madeline.

Back to the 'classics'

Set in the 1950s, the film recreates some of the adventures of Madeline and her schoolmates from four of the *Madeline* stories-in-verse by Ludwig Bemelman. Bemelman wrote his first Madeline story in 1939 ("In an old house in Paris/All covered in vines/lived twelve little girls in two straight lines..."). Interestingly, Madeline (which was Bemelman's wife's name, though spelled with an additonal "e") is based on his own lonely childhood in Austria, after his Belgian artist-father had left both Ludwig and his mother, and a pregnant mistress. In the ensuing five decades Bemelman's stories have delighted many thousands of children, becoming minor classics.

This low-keyed, often humorous movie doesn't insult children's intelligence; it seems clear that Bemelman, husband-wife screenwriters Mark Levin and Jennifer Flackett, and director Diane von Scherler Mayer know and appreciate the child mind.

Nor does *Madeline's* portrayal of the nun insult Christians with the kind of stupid stereotype of nuns and priests (to say nothing of other clergy) that has so often come from Hollywood. And scenes of mealtime grace and allusions to bedtime prayers and Miss Clavel's admonitions to the girls to "thank the Lord that you are well" could have been left out, but weren't.

Though all the characters here are rather broadly drawn, Miss Clavel is not a caricature. American actress Frances McDormand sympathetically presents her as a strong, firm but compassionate woman deeply committed to her calling as a teacher and nun.

The palpable loneliness that children often feel (and frequently, unknown to adults) is explored here, though not too deeply, with a kind of lighthearted sensitivity. A kidnapping subplot and a rather low-speed car chase (actually a truck, a Citroen and a motorbike) round out the story for kids who like "action." All in all, a worthwhile family movie.

Kids, not business partners, come first

CHICAGO, Ill. (EP) — In "Madame Blueberry," the ninth and newest video in the popular "VeggieTales" series, the title character learns a lesson about materialism, and discovers that happiness can't be bought — not even at "Stuff Mart."

It's a bold message for Big Ideas Productions, which just signed a major distribution deal to put its tapes into mainstream stores, including the giant discount chains lampooned in the tape.

"One of our three core values at Big Idea is that we prioritize people over products and profits," explained VeggieTales creator Phil Vischer. "Yes, Madame Blueberry will probably raise eyebrows among some of our partners. It will also send a strong message to everyone we work with that the needs of kids — not business partners — come first."

International fellowship for Christian journalists established

WASHINGTON, D.C. (EP) — Traveling the globe as chief diplomatic correspondent for *Time* magazine tried David Aikman's faith.

"I wanted to have Christian fellowship but I didn't want to have it with people who didn't like journalists," he said. Christian journalists sometimes feel out of place in church where distrust and even outright hostility toward the news media is common.

"The idea formed in my mind a long time ago to form a fellowship of Christian journalists," Aikman told a gathering in London where he announced details of his organization.

Looking for a sympathetic ear

Gegrapha is the name Aikman chose to represent this global community of Christians in journalism. The word is Greek for "I have written" (used in John 19:22 and elsewhere).

The name was chosen for its slight ambiguity, which may make participation in the group easier for journalists who work in newsrooms that are hostile to the Christian faith. The group also had to be unique enough so that web browsers could find it easily and thereby give Christian journalists a haven on the World Wide Web.

By linking together through e-mail, Christian journalists will be able to support each other in prayer, and find a sympathetic ear for job-related challenges that fellow believers and fellow journalists might not understand.

Aikman's plans for Gegrapha include publishing a book of testimonies gathered from Christian journalists. He believes the book will make a strong case for the significance of Christian involvement in the news media.

No more Robinson Crusoe

Aikman's proposal was favorably received by a group of about 70 Christian journalists from around the world who gathered in London for a conference sponsored by the Fieldstead Institute. Fieldstead, a California organization engaged primarily in Third World development projects, paid travel and lodging expenses for the delegates. Aikman, now a fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington D.C., helped co-ordinate the conference.

Some of the attending journalists came from Hindu or Islamic countries where they are a sometimes beleaguered minority. Others represented countries which already have thriving movements of Christian journalists.

"I felt like Robinson Crusoe as a Christian journalist," said Dominic Steele, a radio news reporter from Sydney, Australia. After becoming a Christian he began to look for other Christian journalists. He'd found a total of six when he convened his first meeting. Now he directs a media ministry that co-ordinates 14 Bible study groups at various Australia media outlets and has been winning converts among both media professionals and students.

Jung Il Hwa reported that Christian journalists meet for fellowship at many media outlets in South Korea also. When they decided to organize, they chose the name Christian Journalist Club Korea so that they could expand to other countries by merely changing the last word in their title.

Not automatically 'conservative'

"Some people will automatically attach conservative values to this," said Terry Mattingly, a syndicated columnist for the Scripps Howard News Service and professor at Milligan College. "We want to be known as a group which is enthusiastically journalistic."

"It's not a political, and certainly not a partisan, organization," Aikman agreed.

The London conference featured presentations on challenges to modern journalism by former Los Angeles Times religion writer Russell Chandler, University of California Law Professor Philip Johnson and Regent University Journalism School chair Douglas Tarpley.

Paul Marshall, former senior member in political theory at the Institute for Christian Studies (ICS) in Toronto and author of *Their Blood Cries Out*, discussed religious persecution with the journalists. Baroness Caroline Cox talked about her humanitarian work in trouble spots like Sudan, Russia and Nagorno-Karabakh.

Church

Eminent Lutheran theologian ponders irony of Third World Anglican strength

Marian Van Til

CHICAGO — Reacting to the August 5 Lambeth Conference vote of 526-70 in which bishops of the Anglican Communion called homosexual activity "incompatible with Scripture" and opposed the ordination of homosexuals, well-known Lutheran theologian and University of Chicago professor Martin E. Marty noted the irony of the situation.

In an Internet publication called "Sightings," which is part of an initiative called the Public Religion Project and is funded by Pew Charitable Trust, Marty noted that, "liberals in the American churches from mid-century 'on-sided' with post-colonial and neo-nationalist churches, speaking up for their rights and applauding their integrity. We were told that the passion for liberation in these Third World or poor world or developing-nations churches would help liberate their more conservative, confining counterparts here in imperial America."

Third World Power

But instead, he observed, "Now those churches grow impressively. The Christian power shift is from Europe and North America *into all the world*. The influential voices come from the south — Africa and Latin America and the Asian subcontinent — and from the east, the Asian rim. And the voice of that power tends to be, in North American terms, conservative."

Marty, who personally is opposed to the views of the "conservative" bishops, noted that the Episcopal Church in the U.S. is 2.4 million strong, "but weakening in proportion to the Anglican Communion, which is 73 million strong and getting stronger."

The Episcopal Church "will not have to abide by, but will be influenced by, the decision," he said. "The bishops meet only once a decade in their Lambeth conferences, so member churches will live with this ruling in the meantime.... Forces outside the United States again help shape American religion. A vote in Canterbury, England, casts a shadow on or throws a light in, depending on your viewpoint, all the church communities in the United States."

Marty concluded, "American church people, including bishops who advocate liberalizing policies on the homosexual issues and their supporters, will not be cowed nor liberals be silenced because of Lambeth Conference votes. But, ironically, they will relate in different ways than most had envisioned before we heard the voices of the 'liberated' churches."

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Persecution of Christians continues in Egypt

CAIRO, Egypt (EP) — Coptic Christians in Egypt continue to be persecuted by Muslim extremists. The International Coptic Federation reports that kidnapping of Christian girls by Muslim extremists continues, and Egyptian authorities are doing little to stop it.

In July a girl named Amal Zakareya Botros was kidnapped while walking with her fiance on one of Assiut's streets. "A car suddenly stopped beside them and grabbed her and took off," her uncle said. The girl has not been seen since. The local police chief has told religious leaders and family members that there is no hope the girl will be found, and has advised them to "forget about her."

The kidnapping of Coptic girls has become a weekly routine in Egypt recently. The Egyptian government and police make no effort to bring the girls back or to catch the kidnappers, who are believed to be Muslim fundamentalists. It is believed that more than 300 Coptic girls have been kidnapped.

Excuse to shut them down

In another incident of religious persecution, a new Coptic Christian church in a poor district of Cairo was forcibly closed by Egyptian authorities July 15, just three weeks after it opened. In a "spectacular show of force," police and soldiers sealed off the new Church of St. Bishoi, posting an armed guard and sealing doors and windows with wax.

Government authorities say the church was built illegally using a building permit for a kindergarten; a prominent Coptic leader in Egypt stated that the church could never have been built legally, since the whole government procedure takes "far too much time," making it possible for extremist Muslim groups to cause difficulties and even block building procedures. Egypt's government approval process for a new Christian church can take up to 10 years.

More recently, three Coptic Christians were shot to death on their farm Aug. 12, according to Egyptian police and witnesses. Islamic extremists are believed to be responsible. Two other relatives managed to escape the gunmen.

Security officials blamed the murders on Islamic militants who have waged a violent campaign since 1992 to overthrow Egypt's secular government. About 1,200 people have been killed.

Australian senior citizen 'goes out into all the world' making disciples via Bible for illiterate

Dan Wooding

SYDNEY, Australia — New Zealand-born Stuart Mill is 85 years old, but you wouldn't know it the pace at which he lives his life. For his agile mind is constantly looking for new ways to present the Gospel to people all over the world.

This former missionary to the Solomon Islands said from his home in the suburbs of Sydney, "I've still got my fingers in about five missionary pies with no spare time."

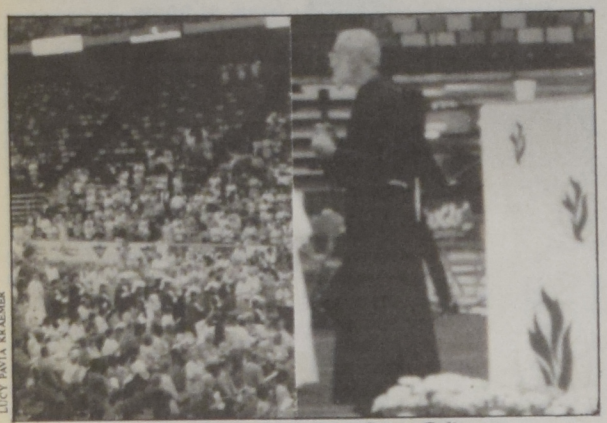
His present main project is called "The One Page Bible" which is aimed at illiterate people. It is a full-color illustrated series of pictures of the gospel message with spaces left for the text to be printed in any language.

"With The One Page Bible non-readers can be reached," explained Mill, who founded Gospel Recordings Australia, now called Language Recordings Inc., Australia, which is part of the Global Recordings Network. "This is important because more than half of the world's people cannot read, and pictures are worth thousands of words. Each person can have and hold [his or her] own copy of it because of its simplicity and the low cost of production. The One Page Bible is already in about 15 major languages and many millions have already been circulated."

Mill said that he sees people like pastors, teachers, translators, evangelists and others being able to use The One Page Bible as an evangelistic tool to explain the gospel for non-readers. "The "big picture" is a vision for the world covered by the year 2000 by putting The One Page Bible on the Internet where some 50 million computer scanners can reproduce it in color and text worldwide.

When Mill lost his beloved wife, Molly, three years ago, whom he met and married in the Solomon Islands, some thought that this terrible loss would slow him down, but it has done just the opposite. The One Page Bible is just one of several major projects which are keeping Mill occupied in his ninth decade of life.

Papal preacher shares 'secret' at Hamilton crusade



LUCY PAVIA KRAEMER

Father Raniero Cantalamessa speaks at Copps Coliseum.

Lucy Pavia Kraemer

HAMILTON, Ont. — Over 4,000 gathered at the annual Catholic Crusade recently held at Copps Coliseum to hear keynote speaker Father Raniero Cantalamessa, preacher of the Papal Household in Rome.

The Franciscan Capuchin, who is an author and international speaker in the Charismatic Renewal witin the Catholic Church, began by telling the audience that he had a secret and that he wanted to share it with them. After an enthusiastic round of applause, he made reference to Titus 3:5b, 6: "He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life."

Grace is the secret

"This is the secret, and it was Jesus who first preached it," the Capuchin priest said. He then challenged his listeners to consider the meaning of the justice of God. Saying that many of us prefer to leave the term "justification by faith" for the theologians to tackle, Fr. Cantalamessa stressed that the meaning of the expression was intended for all the people of God.

"God took the first step," he explained, "and gave to humankind the gift of salvation through Jesus, freely. He created Adam and Eve. All God wanted was for them to say Yes to him."

The bearded priest, dressed in a brown hooded cassock, urged the audience, if they hadn't already done so, to make a U-turn in their lives and acknowledge past and present sins, and to accept the gratuitous gift of God.

"We are justified freely by the blood of Christ," he reiterated, "and not [by] our accomplishments. We need to say Yes and stretch out our hand to God. No one can say, 'I can't believe.' God created us with a free will."

'Make a leap ahead'

Cantalamessa encouraged the participants to make a decision, and make a leap ahead to enter the Kingdom.

"The most important achievement in our lives," he stated "is to be able to say that we have been touched by the Holy Spirit to be Christ's witnesses."

At the close of the crusade, Cantalamessa held a special workshop for Italians in their native tongue.

During the weekend a jubilant celebration of Mass was presided over by Bishop Anthony Tonnos (Hamilton Diocese), Bishop John Michael Sherlock (London) and Bishop Eugene R. LaRocque (Alexandria-Cornwall).

Programs for youth eight to 12 years old and for those 13 and over were also part of the scheduled events. The youth sessions included skits, discussions, testimonies and song.

At this year's crusade, participants obtained a free video cassette of the *Jesus* film, a two-hour documentary of the life of Christ. The script is based on the Gospel of Luke. The film's primary purpose is evangelization — to help spread the Good New of Jesus Christ.

The annual three day event was sponsored by the Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services in Ontario.

Sometimes there's no lamb in the thicket

Chapter & Verse

Wayne Brouwer
Andrew Kuyvenhoven
● Laura Smit
Al Wolters

"By faith Abraham, when put to the test, offered up Isaac."
Heb. 11:17

I spent an hour on the phone yesterday with a friend of mine who is going through a time of great heartache. He has been dating a thoughtful and beautiful woman whom he has come to love, but she has admitted to him that faith has no place in her life and that she doesn't know if it ever will. It is becoming increasingly clear to both of them that they can not be partners in the raising of children or the living out of their lives, much as they love each other, because the differences between them are too great.

And yet.... The pain of separation is so intense that he keeps trying to justify staying with her. Surely, he argues, no one could be as good as this woman undoubtedly is except through God's grace working in her life. Surely her love for him will eventually lead her to a love for God. Surely her sincere and earnest desire for truth will eventually lead her to embrace the One who is the Truth.

I tell my friend that he needs to make his decisions about this relationship based on the woman he knows, not the woman he hopes she may become some day. In return he asks me what role hope should play in his decision. Shouldn't he trust God to bring this woman into faith?

Faith with a limp

Yesterday's conversation came down to a simple but painful question: What does it really mean to say to God, "Not my will, but yours, be done." My friend told me that he has been saying this to God, but he has also been hoping for permission to stay in this relationship.

In our conversation, each of us acknowledged that we tend to express a willingness to make sacrifices for God and then think that such expression should be enough, that we should be rewarded for our pious prayers by being exempt from making any sacrifice at all.

We expect that the offer to make a sacrifice for God will always be rhetorical. We expect that there will always be a lamb in the thicket to take the place of the beloved Isaac whom we've put on the altar only intending to call God's bluff, never really thinking that God will allow us to go through with the execution.

Some people read Hebrews 11 as saying that even as Abraham was preparing to sacrifice Isaac, he had faith that the sacrifice would not be required and that Isaac would be returned to him. But how can a sacrifice be genuine if, even in the moment that it is being contemplated, we expect to be given back the very thing we claim to be sacrificing? Did Abraham think he was calling God's bluff?

Abraham, who had followed God from his comfortable home in Ur to a life of wandering in unknown and often hostile places, was not someone whose faith was a rhetorical gambit. Abraham's faith had always been sacrificially obedient. He surely knew that sometimes the offered sacrifice is accepted.

In the great list of heroes which makes up Hebrews 11, straightforward success is never offered as evidence of faith. The text does not say, "By faith, Abraham became wealthy," or "By faith, David established a dynasty," or "By faith, this person found a loving and happy marriage."

Faith is seen in suffering and in sacrifice, in "strength won out of weakness" [verse 34], in fertility only after long barrenness, in resurrection only after painful death.

Just as Jesus in Gethsemane was not released from his offer to lay down his life, my friend may not be released from his offer to give up the woman that he loves. There is no promise that if he makes this sacrifice he will receive her back again. There is also no promise that he will recover from this love, that there will be some other woman somewhere who will make him forget what he has given up. He may never recover. He may never meet anyone else who loves him this much.

The author of Hebrews urges us to "lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed" [12:12-13]. But that healing may not take place in this life. On the way to our heavenly country, faith often has a limp.

Laura Smit, a pastor in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), recently acquired her PhD in philosophical aesthetics at Boston University, Boston, Mass. She will be engaged in a post-doctoral fellowship at BU until she takes up a teaching position in the religion and theology department at Calvin College in September 1999.

Future of Christian broadcasting in South Africa 'iffy'

CAPETOWN, South Africa (EP) — A new law could spell the end of Christian broadcasting in South Africa. According to Christian radio leaders in South Africa, a white paper being considered by the government would result in all applications for "Community of Interest" licenses being returned to applicants, while applications for geographical community licenses would be scrutinized to be sure Christians do not control community radio stations.

Rev. Fano Sibisi, vice-chair of the Association of Christian Broadcasters, urges Christians to apply pressure on the Portfolio Committee on Broadcasting, which will be handling complaints, and to recommend the removal of the "anti-religious section of the White Paper."

Letters of concern may be directed to: The Communications Portfolio Committee; Rita Schaafsma; Box 75; Cape Town 8000, or faxed to 021-4623242 and 021-4621646.

Feature

A woman sent by God

by
Tony Campolo

Mother Teresa died on September 5, 1997. In memory of her life and service to God, we publish these reflections on the first anniversary of her death.

She was small in stature but she stood head and shoulders above the rest of us. Her life and here message affected the way we view the poor and had a great impact on the ways in which we live our lives. She called upon us to take Matthew 25 literally and to see Jesus in the poor waiting to be loved and cared for.

She told Catholics that they should show the same reverence for the poor that they show towards the Eucharist. She taught them that when they touched the poor, they were touching the body of Christ. She revealed to Protestants that Christianity is truly ecumenical and that the essence of the faith lies not in institutional affiliation, but within the expressions of love in the name of Christ.

Whenever she wrote, she spelled the word poor with a capital "P" because to her, the poor were the sacred means though which God comes to all people of all creeds. Her concern was not only for the poor, but for all the oppressed people of the world. She taught us much when she said, "Whenever I look into the eyes of a man dying from AIDS, I have the awareness that Jesus is staring back at me!"

None so poor

The materially rich also saddened her and warranted her love. She was aware that those who have material possessions are often emotionally poor. She claimed that there are none so poor as those who are denied affection from others. Visiting an old folks home in New York City, she looked around and exclaimed, "I have never seen poorer people anywhere in the world."

Taking care of poor, impoverished India was easy, as far as she was concerned. It only took a piece of bread and some water. But in the United States she saw people whose physical needs were cared for, but who were left emotionally neglected and lonely. These, she believed, were the poorest people on earth.

Mother Teresa was well aware that people who want to give and serve have to do so for the right reasons. Paying a visit to Haiti in the mid-1970s, she met a man who wanted to give money to the Sisters of Charity. When she was handed a huge cheque by the man, she proceeded to tear it up and say, "Instead of giving money to the poor, why don't you go home and love your wife?" She would not allow giving to the poor to be a means of escaping the guilt that should be felt by those who fail to love those whom God has given them to love.

Start at home

I know of a woman who went through a divorce and felt very much alone in the world. She wrote to Mother Teresa and asked if it were possible for her to join the Sisters of Charity in India and minister among the needy. Months went by without an answer. Eventually a hand-addressed envelope came to the home of the woman. Inside the envelope was a simple note that read, "Find your own Calcutta!"

Mother Teresa was all too aware that we have a tendency to look for exotic places to do service for the Kingdom of God when, in reality, there are needs all around us that are waiting to be met with Christ's love. She made us aware that until we are faithful in loving those around us, we ought not to think we will be able to love those who live in some far off place.

Tony Campolo is the executive director of the Evangelical Association for the Promotion of Education with its headoffice in St. Davids, Penn.

Visit with Mother Teresa

Lainey Rozema

After my husband retired in February of 1997, we decided to do some traveling. We ended up backpacking through India. We left Sarnia, Ont., with only carry-on luggage. We wanted to visit and mingle with the local people so we found reasonable accommodation in small guesthouses and hotels were Indian travelers themselves would stay.

We also visited Calcutta. This big sprawling city of 16 million people is where Mother Teresa lived and worked. Here she established her missions. We had read the book *The City of Joy* before we went, and found that the horrendous poverty described in that book still exists.

We crossed the Howrah Bridge and ended up walking through some of Calcutta's worst slum sprawl. We also saw how some children were transported to school by human-powered rickshaws. We, too, took this form of transportation but found, in the end, that it was quicker to walk.

On March 5, we had the opportunity to celebrate mass with Mother Teresa at her home, along with the Sisters who lived there. The mass was spoken in English. After the priests left, Mother Teresa continued to lead the nuns in prayer. After the nuns went back to begin their daily tasks, Mother Teresa was wheeled towards us and we were able to converse with her.

Her business

Mother Teresa spoke to us in a very friendly manner. One visitor from Indonesia had asked her how their mission could obtain more sisters. We were impressed with how Mother Teresa answered her questions. She came across very caring, loving, and yet so businesslike. In fact, she even handed us her "business card." (In India, we had received quite a few of these from various people.)

As she passed out the cards, she would say to us with a big grin on her face: "And here is my business card." The card said the following:

The fruit of SILENCE is Prayer.
The fruit of PRAYER is Faith.
The fruit of FAITH is Love.
The fruit of LOVE is Service.
The fruit of SERVICE is Peace.
Mother Teresa.

Mother Teresa gave us her blessing. Her inspiration was real. She lived a life devoted to prayer and meditation.

Practical work

Her work was put into practice mainly by ministering to physical needs of those in poverty, thus she was known as the "Saint of the Gutters." She was selfless in her dedication to the destitute, the suffering and the dying.

We learned that Mother Teresa helped establish 32 homes for the dying and the destitute, 67 leprosy clinics, 325 medical dispensaries, 28 planning centres and 81 schools.

We visited Mother Teresa's Hospital for the Dying and the Destitute, the Nirmal Hriday. We experienced selfless love and dedication by nuns and volunteers. Men and women who had been left on the streets to die were picked up by the workers and brought here to be fed, washed, clothed and given medical treatment. There were those who actually became better. And those who died, died with dignity.

One elderly man, seemingly blind and very close to death, sang for joy as we were there. We shook his frail hand. He understood our English. His smile seemed one of contentment.

There was room for 50 cots on the male ward and 50 cots on the female ward. And yet when we walked on the streets, we saw many more that should have been there.

Mother Teresa's orphanage was also a very busy home. Babies and young children crowded the various rooms. Each child had a crib. All needed and wanted much attention from the caretakers. We learned that quite a few of the orphans were awaiting to be adopted.

And then there was the ward for the physically disabled, and their needy cries. Although there were many selfless workers including volunteers, the needs of these children seemed too enormous for the workers to handle.

Our visit with Mother Teresa and her various mission stations was one of the highlights of our visit to India. Having been a missionary to Africa, I saw in Mother Teresa a Mother of All Missionaries, a genuine example of selfless love for the sake of God's people everywhere.

We still mourn her passing, yet we rejoice and are thankful for what she has taught us.

Lainey Rozema (teNyenhuis) lives in Sarnia, Ont.

Cairo's garbage dump priest packs 'Cave Cathedral'

Dan Wooding

CAIRO, Egypt — Father Sama'an has possibly the most unusual parish in the world. It is located on Muqattam Mountain, home to 30,000 garbage collectors or *zabbaleen* in Cairo. But this extraordinary man has brought a wonderful beauty to the ashes of this area of teeming, narrow dirt lanes — a parish church that is a modern marvel not just for the garbage collectors, but for all who visit it.

Fr. Sama'an's incredible "Cave Cathedral" is the largest church in the Middle East. It seats 20,000 and would do justice to the Hollywood Bowl with its modern sound system and closed-circuit television. It is spectacular, as a huge overhanging rock covers most of the amphitheater. The church is affiliated with the Coptic Orthodox Church that has about 6 million adherents in Egypt, or 13.5 percent of the total population.

Humble preacher

As word has spread through the Middle East about the Muqattam "Cave Cathedral," it has drawn together evangelicals, Orthodox, and Catholics. Its pulpit has attracted not only the Coptic Orthodox pope but also Western evangelicals.

Bearded and clad in Orthodox garb, this humble cleric preaches like Billy Graham and also prays for the sick at regular Thursday services, which are attended by thousands of believers from Cairo.

The congregation members left the village's pungent odors and crowded into the cavern for a night of vibrant singing with the help of a praise choir.

Exorcizing spirits

In the priest's office before the service began, this reporter observed Father Sama'an pray for a sick young woman. It was an extraordinary sight and something one would not expect to see from an Orthodox priest. It was almost like a scene from the film *The Exorcist* as he stomped on the floor and commanded spirits to leave her.

Then he went to the service. While Father Sama'an's sermon started quietly, his voice slowly turned into thunder.

Many in the congregation had spent the day collecting and sorting through a mountain of garbage. Cairo's 14 million people daily produce an estimated 7,000 tons of garbage, but municipal and private trucks collect less than 50 per cent of the city's refuse.

During the past 35 years, thousands of Christians, fleeing poverty in rural Upper Egypt, have congregated in villages within Cairo's garbage dumps, collecting trash and recycling metal, plastic, paper and bones. Although the villages are disease-prone and poverty-stricken, a strong Christian community has emerged, as believers have developed schools, health clinics and churches.

Knock on the door

Through an interpreter, Father Sama'an explained how his ministry began. "It started because of one Egyptian garbage collector," he said. "Through him, I became a changed man and eventually a worker for the Lord.

"I was living in Cairo and was a counselor in one of the big companies. I had lost one of my precious watches. It was very expensive and I was very sad.

"One day, I received a knock at my door. A man in a long dirty dress, carrying a bag, asked me if I had lost something. I asked him how he knew that I lost something. I was afraid of him. The garbage man told me he had asked at all of the apartments in the building and everyone had denied losing something, and when he had taken the garbage from here and was separating it at home, he found something. 'So, sir, please tell me what you lost,' he said. I told him I had lost a watch.

Honest till death

"He took it out and said, 'Is this the one you lost?' I was shocked. I told him to please come in, and asked him his name and where he lived. I also asked him, 'Why didn't you take the watch for yourself?' he replied, 'My Christ told me to be honest until death.'

"'You are a Christian?' I asked him, and he said he was. I didn't know Christ at the time, but I told him that I saw Christ in him. This watch was worth $11,000.

"I told the garbage collector, 'Because of what you have done and your great example, I will worship the Christ you are worshiping.'"

First things first

So began the Christian life of one Farahat, who eventually became an Orthodox priest and took the name Father Sama'an, after an 11th century saint. He began visiting the Muqattam area and was confronted with a terrible state of affairs there, with drunkenness, sickness and violence.

He began to emphasize the need for repentance. "Only if our spiritual life with God is improved, God will provide for our well-being," he told Kees Hulsman for an article that appeared in *Christianity Today*. Egyptian physicians began providing free medical assistance, and Sama'an continued to preach a message of repentance. "People have to give their lives to Christ," he asserts.

The priest said that when he first arrived in the area, "all they knew was to drink, gamble and live in sin. This saddened my heart. How come they are in Cairo and do not know Jesus Christ? I started to have a burden on my heart for this place."

God's answer

Father Sama'an said the first thing he asked God for was "his plan for this place and towards these people." Sama'an went on, "On Sunday, at 6:00 in the morning, I came here to the top of the mountain to a cave to pray. I started to pray for three weeks. After the third week, on March 15, 1974, in the middle of the day, I asked the Lord, 'Why am I here, what is your plan for these people? The people here are very hard and difficult. They live being drunk all of the time. Just lead me, Lord.'

"While praying that, there was a big storm of wind, the papers from the garbage were flying all over, millions of papers, and one paper fell right in front of me as I was bowing praying, and I picked it up. It was a page from the Holy Bible. It was very strange. Of millions of pieces of paper, why this one? It was from Acts 18:9: 'Don't be afraid, because I am with you, speak and never stop because there are many who will listen.'"

At that point Father Sama'an began a four-year work in homes and on the streets, in open areas near the dump, then meetings in homes, and then in bigger churches, then in his "Cave Cathedral." After those four years, he became a priest. That was 1978.

Variety of ministries

"'It's not *our* work,'" says Fr. Sama'an, "'or by *our* strength, but by his power, says the Lord of Hosts.' And all this work is the work of the Lord. The secret is the Holy Spirit. There are hundreds of workers with me."

Fr. Sama'an explained that besides the "big" meetings, there are other meetings at the cave church, such as the Monday morning meeting in the

See ***PRIEST*** *on p.14...*

Where the Spirit of Jesus is, there is freedom

A response to Al Wolters on the Bible's 'timeless principles'

Henk Hart

Dear Al,

The ending of your response to me in last week's CC tells me you still stand behind what you publicly said at the February 1995 "Christ in the '90s" conference: that you had come to see that you and I rely upon the same Scriptures. But I respect that you have problems with my approach. So let me get straight to work and respond to your paragraphs under the same headings.

> "The Spirit's basic principle of interpretation seems to me to be the life of Jesus."

What are 'timeless principles'?

You think that philosophically I have a defensible case. Then it's important to realize that what ordinary people mean by timeless principles has roots in philosophy. In my view, *Scripture itself* (*sola scriptura*, please!) is not clear about its principles being timeless. Rather, an unbiblical Greek philosophical tradition and its influence on our theology are needed to make a clear case for such principles. We say Christianity is a historical religion. What meaning does this have for the character of its teachings?

A logical lapse

There is, of course, no way of demonstrating in a short piece that every principle in the Bible is subject to change. I was trying to give clear examples to show the problem with what CC reader Gilbert Zekveld wrote in his letter of Aug. 21. He suggests the *Belgic Confession* teaches that nothing in the Bible ever changes at all. I think that Paul and Acts claim that the entire Old Testament law changes.

To show that my thinking is not Reformed you need to do more than just say so. You would need to show how my view is not biblical (*sola scriptura*). I think Acts 15 clearly teaches that, with a few exceptions, non-Jewish Christians are not bound by Old Testament law. And even those exceptions are largely taken back elsewhere in the New Testament (e.g., Romans 14). That's what I learn *from the Bible.*

Love and fear

I indeed think the New Testament, late in its development, for the most part, formulates our fundamental relation to God as one of loving rather than of fearing God. I think the Bible itself does not water down that the fear of the Lord is truly a matter of fear, deadly fear even. Israel is expected to fear no other gods. But they should indeed fear their own God if they disobey.

I don't read fear as a metaphor for revering God. In Deut. 28: 15-68, a developed formulation of Old Testament law, you find a clear example of the fear of God. "Be in dread" says verse 66. The Apostle John fundamentally changes that language, as Jesus taught him the summary of the law: love God. So 1 John 5 changes Ecclesiastes' "Fear God and keep his commandments" to "Love God and keep his commandments." That change in language in turn fundamentally changes our relationship to God.

I deeply believe that, even when we sin, we must not fear God, from whom nothing can separate us (Romans 8). As one of the Bolton conferees said: "We are too preoccupied with getting things right rather than with how we relate to one another (loving our neighbor)." Between Ecclesiastes and John is Romans 8:1: "For those who are in Christ Jesus there is now no condemnation." That sounds to me like a call to reformulate our basic priorities in our relation to God and neighbor.

Paul and the law

You write: "The Reformed tradition of interpretation has always stressed...." Which Reformed tradition? And how long is always? Does it go past Ridderbos? Surely we need not think we're caught in a frozen slice of the bread, diverse and

Dr. Henk Hart

lively tradition of *reformata reformanda*, i.e., keep reforming what has been reformed?

I think that if W. Bouwsma's 1988 Oxford book *John Calvin* was right, then all his life Calvin was concerned with the very problem we're discussing in this exchange. And I think my readings are in line with Calvin's basic emphasis. If your preferred Reformed interpretation were right, it would seem that if Jews had been obedient and not misused the law, Jesus would not have been needed. But that's not what the Bible teaches.

In this context I should say that when I talk about change, I do not have discontinuities in mind. I always see continuity in the changes we find in the Bible. This very continuity makes it possible to extend the Bible's own process of change into our own time, with the guidance of the Spirit. Because the Spirit originally guided them, these biblical changes now serve as our guides.

The decisive difference

I agree that interpreting the Spirit's guidance is the real difference between us. When you suggest that I abandon the *sola scriptura* principle, something else may be the case, namely that you honor "Reformed" more than "biblical."

I fully and wholeheartedly agree with you when you write that "the Spirit never leads the church into any truth' that supersedes... [the Bible] as standard." But then we must read that Bible on this point and take it seriously. In it Jesus teaches us that the Spirit leads us into the truth. The apostles show us what they understood Jesus to mean by this. They set the church on a track of responsibility to work out a framework of principles for her own time, guided by the Spirit, in continuity with the Scriptures (Acts 15). They do not want the church to fall back into an unchangeable code of laws (2 Corinthians 3, Ephesians 2, all of Galatians), but to move forward with guidelines the Spirit provides.

When discussing the kinds of questions we're now discussing, the Bible in the New Testament overwhelmingly appeals to the Spirit more than to Scriptures (the law, Moses, the prophets). So the Bible as standard is not, on my reading of the New Testament, the perfectly finished and worked-out set of unchanging principles to which I hear you appeal, Al, but an open invitation to responsibly find our own way in history, with the guidance of the Spirit and in continuity with the Bible.

And the Spirit's basic principle of interpretation seems to me to be the life of Jesus: "Now the Lord is the Spirit and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom" (2 Cor.3:17).

'Show me I'm wrong'

By saying that my interpretation is "highly debatable" you may wish to suggest that it is likely that I am wrong. To me, the expression signifies that the issue is far from settled. So if you want to argue that I am wrong, I hope you'll come up with more than an appeal to traditions or authorities. I am wide open to a biblical argument. But please show me not only that there are different views you like better, but show me that my interpretation is wrong.

To make matters perfectly clear: you are right in understanding me to say that the Bible teaches us that we, like Peter, should be open to the Spirit to guide us into new truth, truth coming from God, truth continuous with the Bible, truth that will make our Lord alive in the church.

Dr. Hendrik Hart is senior member in philosophy at the Institute for Christian Studies (ICS) in Toronto. We have invited Dr. Wolters to respond one more time in the next issue, after which we invite our readers to take part in this important discussion.

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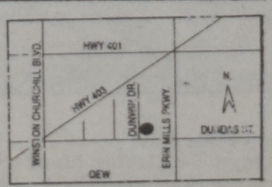

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Church press quotes

Rev. Jacob Kuntz

Homosexuality

We hardly know a current issue that keeps denominations and local churches so busy and so divided as homosexuality. Again and again the big question is: How do we deal with practicing homosexuals? And what does the Bible say?

In the 1998 Synod report of the Reformed Church in America (RCA) we learn that the appointment of a woman to an interim teaching position at the New Brunswick Theological Seminary was rescinded because it was acknowledged that she "is living openly in a committed relationship with another woman." See the* Church Herald *July/August 1998.

"President Norman Kansfield had extended a one-year interim teaching position to a woman who had been serving as an adjunct professor for several years. Many acknowledge that the woman is an excellent teacher, but she is living openly in a committed relationship with another woman.

"Upon learning about the contract, the New Brunswick board of trustees 'thoughtfully and prayerfully reviewed this matter and made a decision to rescind the appointment for the peace and unity of the church.'

"Because homosexuality is a volatile issue that threatens to derail the RCA from focussing on its mission, Granberg-Michaelson [the denomination's general secretary] recommended that the general synod refrain from deliberative debate and policy decisions relating to homosexuality in 1998, 1999 and 2000. The RCA has committed to engage in intentional reflection and shared discernment to the pastoral challenges raised by the issues of homosexuality using a variety of papers, statements, and resources adopted in 1978, 1979, 1990, 1994 and 1996.

"These matters will not be resolved by more overtures, debates and votes at General Synod,' said Granberg-Michaelson. 'The context for these discussions is the board of elders of our congregations and in the pastors' studies.'

"The recommendation was debated and amended but was passed."

The subject also came up at the Conference of Mennonites in Canada (CMC), meeting in Stratford, Ont. (See* Canadian Mennonite, *July 27). In 1986 the Conference had declared "heterosexual marriage as normative." This time the Conference adopted, with a 93 per cent majority, the following resolution:

"Resolution on homosexuality:

"1. That we renew our common commitment of faithfulness to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, according to the light that God has given us in the Scriptures and through the Holy Spirit, and that we call for and acknowledge the integrity of the same commitment on the part of those who disagree with us;

"2. That we reaffirm our convictions as stated in Vision, Healing and Hope,' Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective, and Resolution on Human Sexuality' as our understandings of God's will for us;

"3. That we encourage one another to become 'communities of grace, joy and peace, so that God's healing and hope flow through us to the world,' not excluding those whose sexual orientation is homosexual;

"4. That we encourage one another to uphold the biblical call to faithfulness, chastity and self-discipline in all sexual relationships; and that we encourage the sexually and relationally broken to healing and wholeness in Christ;

"5. That we continue to dialogue on those matters wherein we disagree, and that we call upon the leaders of the CMC to facilitate and lead in this dialogue; and

"6. That we urge congregation and conferences, when they make decisions and take actions, to strive to enhance rather than hinder their relationship with congregations and conferences of the CMC."

The General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Canada had to deal with a "rebel congregation" in Lachine (Que.). In that church (St. Andrew's) the members voted to leave the denomination rather than give up their gay minister (see* ChristianWeek, *July 14). We read:

"On June 11, lay elders and clergy [the General Assembly] from across the country voted by a strong majority to give St. Andrew's an ultimatum. If the congregation chooses to stay within the Presbyterian Church, its elders 'must cease and desist from this contumacious (unyielding, intractable, obstinate) behavior,' accept a new interim minister and begin a search for a permanent replacement for MacDonald [the gay minister].

"'If they choose to leave, then we wish them godspeed,' said the general assembly. Two weeks later, on June 28, St. Andrew's held a tearful congregational meeting and voted by a narrow margin to leave the Presbyterian church. MacDonald, who lives with his gay partner, said St. Andrew's 'has now shown the Presbyterian Church that its members are willing to leave over the issue.'

"'The denomination is going to have to deal with this issue once and for all, or else this will happen in many other congregations,' he said.

"Since 1985, the Presbyterian Church has reviewed its stand on sexuality at least three times, and repeatedly reaffirmed its historic belief that the only biblical options for a Christian are celibacy or sexual intercourse within heterosexual marriage."

In that same issue of* ChristianWeek *we found an article by Dr. John Redekop, well-known professor and Mennonite Brethren leader. He mentions the enormous attendance at Gay Pride Week parades (750,000 participants and spectators in Toronto) and also refers to the 12th World AIDS Conference in Geneva. But, says he,

"In all of the reporting about the Pride parades and in all of the new statistics reported in Geneva, I have not read or seen one word about the fundamental and undeniable connection between the two. No one seems willing to say that most AIDS deaths are fully avoidable because they are caused by wrong moral choices.

"And therein lies the great irony. Governments and media people are willing to promote 'pride' in lifestyles that are directly responsible for a high percentage of AIDS deaths. What has happened to common sense and simple logic?

"Some readers will now point out that homosexual lifestyle should not be equated with homosexual promiscuity. They have a point. However, all of the data I've read corroborates the point that, by and large, homosexual people who have chosen to be sexually active have a penchant for promiscuity. Certainly there are exceptions, including some people in the Christian church, but these exceptions do not change the basic reality.

"Clearly homosexuals deserve justice and fairness and the protection of basic rights. They are taxpayers and fellow citizens who have every right to demand legal impartiality, procedural justice, civil liberties and freedom from discrimination. And the church should be upholding such rights and promoting fair treatment.

"But that does not mean that Christians should condone the blatant misuse of God-given sexuality, endorse a lifestyle which undermines the biblically-mandated norms for marriage and family, or ignore the major cause of the terrible tragedy of AIDS."

Finally a quotation from a paper which does not belong to the Church press, the* Globe and Mail. *The August 8 issue contains a story: "Church leaders apologize to gay Anglicans." The article refers to a resolution passed at the recent Lambeth Conference in which "homosexuals were banned from the priesthood unless they remain celibate, and in which the blessing of same-sex unions is 'disallowed.' (The vote at Lambeth was 526 to 70, with 45 bishops abstaining).

The Anglican archbishop Michael Peers (who resides in Toronto), plus 93 other bishops from around the world protested this decision in a pastoral statement to gays and lesbians, "promising to continue to work for their full inclusion in the church." From the* Globe *story we quote the following lines:

"'We apologize for any sense of rejection that has occurred,' the statement from dissenting bishops says. 'You, our sisters and brothers in Christ, deserve a more thorough hearing than you received over the past three weeks. We will work to make that so.'

"According to a note at the top of the statement, it is still in the process of being signed by the bishops, so the final number endorsing it could rise or fall by the end of the conference today. However, the list of bishops' names attached to the statement shows that the vast majority are from Western countries, including England, the U.S., South Africa and Australia.

"The division over homosexuals that erupted at the conference is between liberals from the West and evangelicals and conservatives who are mostly from Africa and Asia.

"In a press release issued yesterday, Bishop Peers makes it clear that he is not happy with the way the debate was conducted.

"'I must disassociate myself from any who perceive this action as a 'victory.' Canadians generally will have been scandalized by some of the reported comments, as were Canadian bishops here.

"'The debate was marked at times by outright condemnations of homosexual persons, sometimes phrased in viciously prejudicial language. This is not consistent with the gospel of Jesus Christ as I understand it.'

"In the statement, the bishops say that they are not in agreement on the meaning of full inclusion. In the Anglican Church, homosexuals can be ordained if they agree to remain celibate."

Jacob Kuntz is a retired Christian Reformed pastor who lives in Brampton, Ont.

Priest packs 'Cave Cathedral'

...continued from p. 11

smaller chapels, also carved out of stone with huge carvings depicting stories from the life of Christ on its walls. "This is attended by 700 women," he said. "There are prayer meetings, young men's meetings and family meetings."

What is so extraordinary about the church is that, along with those arriving in rags, one may see a Mercedes winding its way through the garbage area and up into the cave church at the top of the mountain. "People from all backgrounds come to our services," Sama'an explained. "God's aim for me is to help all of the people here in this city."

God does wonders among the poor

Dan Wooding

CAIRO, Egypt — Although some wealthy people do come to Father Sama'an's Cave Cathedral, most of the work is carried on among the garbage collectors.

The priest says that he believes very much in the supernatural aspects of ministry, especially among the poor.

When asked what the poor can teach us, Father Sama'an said:

'Simplicity.'

"The Lord is doing miracles and wonders here," he said. "There were a lot of people healed and set free from demons. Every day God anoints us and his work. At the same time, if this work were done among wealthy people, they would think with their mind, speak with their brain, but the simple people within our midst put their faith right out in front of the wise people.

A new head

"In 1974, a six-year-old boy who somehow got behind a big truck bringing water had his head crushed under a wheel. His head was completely flat and he was dying. His family took him to the hospital. That day we held a meeting at night and we had no singing, no speaking. We just prayed only for the boy," says Sama'an.

"We prayed, 'Give the boy a new head. Amen.' The next day a doctor at the hospital said that unless there was a miracle, he's completely dead. The boy was lying in bed, his nose and ears gushing blue blood, his mouth inhaled tiny breaths. His mother sat beside him, crying. We kept praying, 'Lord, give Adam a new head. We believe.'

"Nine days later, we went to see Adam. They said he had been sent home. We went to his house to see him. He was not sleeping or lying in bed; he was playing with the other kids. His new head was now bigger than his old one.

"And today, he's a great worker for the Lord. He's married and has two children, a boy and a girl; and his head is still a witness. This is our God. We did not heal him with science or brains, but by faith. God will do the impossible by faith."

Simple things

When asked what the poor can teach us, Father Sama'an said: "Simplicity. "What is great is a man who comes to Jesus Christ. What is old is gone and the new is now completely changed — a new heart, a new mind. This is what happens when one comes to Jesus Christ and this appears in his natural and practical life after coming to Christ."

He added, "The Lord wants to use the simplest things — with five loaves he will feed thousands. This is our God. Believe through his Word and he does miracles. Amen."

Dan Wooding is a British journalist now living in southern California with his wife, Norma. He is the founder and international director of ASSIST (Aid to Special Saints in Strategic Times).

Transitions with the Monarch

Sonya Vanderveen Feddema

A swarm of monarch butterflies rests on a branch.

Butterflies fluttered in my stomach. With a trinity of transitions crowding my life, they were inevitable. My oldest daughter, Rachel, was leaving home for college. My youngest of five children, Davita, would enter Grade 1 a day later. And my father-in-law was dying.

My husband and I travelled the six hour trip with Rachel to her college and later repeatedly made the hour-and-a-half trip to visit my father-in-law during his last days on earth. As I stared out the car window, thinking about life and death, beginnings and endings, I noticed a monarch butterfly. Later I saw another one. And then another.

Our trips were punctuated by the vivid orange and black creatures, winged-waltzers, flitting past us as they journeyed to Point Pelee National Park. There they would join other monarchs and, when conditions were advantageous, would lift off together over Lake Erie and fly to a wintering site in Mexico.

As I contemplated the monarch I realized they were an appropriate metaphor, a word-picture for the transitions I was experiencing. Since change is constant in the lives of all adults and children, we can learn from the monarch butterfly about what to expect from transitions and how to cope with them.

Like the monarch, we are sometimes alone in our transitions. But ultimately, we are not alone.

First, the monarch's name enlightened me. In *An Extraordinary Life*, Laurence Pringle states, "When European colonists saw bright orange and black butterflies in North America, they were reminded of the Prince of Orange, who became King William III of England, so they named the butterflies monarchs" (Orchard Books, 1997, p.11). The monarch butterfly's name reminds me of the Monarch in my life, Jesus Christ. He is King of Kings and Lord of all my transitions. Whether I face new opportunities because all my children are now in school every day or whether I confront death, he is in control and gives me strength. Habakkuk puts it this way: "The Sovereign Lord is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to go on the heights" (Habakkuk 3:19).

Second, the monarch is usually alone for part of its journey. Each flies to a common destination from the site where it hatched from eggs on milkweed plants and developed through the stages of caterpillar, pupa, chrysalis and finally, butterfly. Then it joins thousands of other monarchs to travel to Mexico.

Like the monarch, we are sometimes alone in our transitions. Others can't traverse our passages for us. But ultimately, we are *not* alone. God is with us. Jesus and the Holy Spirit intercede for us constantly. Just as the monarchs congregate, we cluster in Christian communities which encourage us, pray for us and share with us experiences of God's faithfulness through past transitions.

Third, monarchs face many obstacles — storms, strong winds, predators and speeding vehicles — before they reach their destination. Our transitions are also characterized by hurdles and struggles. My father-in-law poignantly expressed this truth as he lay dying. He said, "It's a struggle getting into this world. And it's a struggle getting out of it."

Fourth, though seemingly fragile, monarchs are tenacious and strong. In her book, *Monarch Butterflies: Mysterious Travelers*, Bianca Lavies notes, "They are strong, fast fliers, reaching speeds of ten to thirty miles an hour" (Dutton Children's Books, 1992, p.13). Like the monarch, we often seem fragile as we face transitions. Feelings of vulnerability and insecurity hound us. Focusing on our fears of an unknown future, we sometimes forget we are strong. No, as Christians, we don't fly on the wings of our own resilience. God gives us strength. As he made clear to Moses and the Israelites, "...I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself" (Exodus 19:4).

Fifth, "Other butterflies migrate, but the monarch is the only butterfly that makes a round-trip" (Bianca Lavies, p.3). Like the monarch, on this earthly journey we are always heading home. All our small passages are nothing compared to the vast, glorious change we will experience when we die in Christ and go home to him forever. Just before my father-in-law died, he said, "I'm ready to go!" Confronting all our transitions in the hope and longing for eternity with Christ fills life with joy and meaning and eradicates fear.

Monarch butterflies are bright orange splashes of radiance, winged-wonders that point to a marvellous creator. He created us, too, and transforms us, through our sometimes painful transitions, into brilliant Christ-colored flashes of his dazzling goodness in this world.

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CHERYL
and
SEAN

The wedding will take place on Oct. 3, 1998, at 3 p.m., in the First Chr. Ref. Church of Guelph, Ont., with Rev. Ruth Hoffman officiating.

Future address: 466 Quebec Ave. #2, Toronto, ON M6P 2V4

Thanks

LAMMERTSEN:

A heartfelt thank you to all who shared in our happiness on the occasion of our 55th wedding anniversary. A special thank you to our children and grandchildren who did so much to make this an unforgettable day. Above all our thanks and praise to our heavenly Father for His love and goodness.

Gerard and Ge Lammertsen,
Holland Christian Homes,
7900 McLaughlin Rd. S., PT1107,
Brampton, ON L6Y 5A7

WASSINK:

Thank you for all the cards and best wishes for our 45th anniversary. We enjoyed your presence at the open house.

Evert & Klaziena Wassink.

Births

MOSTERT (nee LOUWS):

Henry and Nancy, along with children Cheryl, Bryan and Jessica, praise God for our two little miracles

HANNAH GRACE
and
BETHANY HENRIETTA

born July 29, 1998, in Hamilton, Ont. Doubly delighted are grandparents Dick and Ena Mostert of Hamilton, Ont., and John and Mary Louws of Talbotville, Ont.

Anniversaries

1953 September 17 1998

BOB and MARY VANDERVENNEN
(nee HUISSEN)

are celebrating 45 years of God's blessing in our marriage.

Children:

Mark & Alice VanderVennen — Cobourg, Ont.
Robyn, Luke, Rachel

Paul & Judy VanderVennen — Toronto, Ont.
Jacqueline, Jason, Shane, Derek

Kathy Vander Vennen — Toronto, Ont.

Anniversaries

Ermelo Stoney Creek
the Neth. Ont.
1948 October 7 1998

"If Your presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here" (Ex.33:15).

With joy and thanksgiving to God we announce the 50th anniversary of our parents and grandparents

PASTOR JOHN and ALICE DE PATER

We thank the Lord for the years He has given them and pray for the Lord's continued blessing.

Margo & Jack Van Gilst — Finch, Ont.
Matthew, Katrina, Benjamin, Luther, Reuben

Bea & Renny Van Gilst — Chesterville, Ont.
Stephanie, David, Timothy
Andrew, Daniel

Jan & Elizabeth De Pater — Clayton, Ont.
Dylan, Aaron

Alice & John Douma — Chesterville, Ont.
Melissa, Jason, Aaron, Thomas, Miranda

Stephen De Pater — Cornwall, Ont.
Steven, Jennifer

James & Barb De Pater — Chesterville, Ont.
Alexandra, Madison, Erik

Open house on Saturday, Oct. 10, 1998, D.V., from 2-5 p.m., at Vineland Free Ref. Church, 3691 Regional Road 81 (formerly Hwy. 8). Best wishes only.

Home address: 30 Mountain Ave., Village Court, Apt. 2 Q, Stoney Creek, ON L8G 3P3

Obituaries

Aalten Wayland
the Neth. Mich.
Feb. 29, 1908 - Aug. 5, 1998

With sadness but also with joy, we announce that our father, grandfather and great-grandfather

EVERT HENDRIK TE HENNEPE

went to live with his Lord and Savior. He was preceded to heaven by his wife Hendrika Aleida Wubbels (1909 - 1996), and his two oldest grandchildren Alynne Wesselius (1960 - 1971) and Henry Wesselius (1962 - 1962).

He is lovingly remembered by his children:

Willem & Kathleen te Hennepe — 1242 - 140 th Ave., R.R. 1, Wayland, MI 49348

Dian & Wilhelmus Wesselius — Box 94, Forrest, MB R0K 0W0

Jack & Sherry te Hennepe — 8845 Byron Ave., Byron Center, MI 49315

13 grandchildren and 16 great-grandchildren, his brother Johan te Hennepe, Abbotsford, B.C., and four sisters in the Netherlands, as well as other relatives in the U.S., Canada, and the Netherlands.

Funeral services were held in Byron Center on Aug. 8, 1998, Rev. T. Groelsema of the Byron Center First Chr. Ref. Church officiated.

Psalm 90

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Job Opportunities | **Job Opportunities** | **Miscellaneous**

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This part-time position (approx. 15 hours per week) requires a motivated, competent musician who can organize and provide leadership through music in worship. The ideal candidate will demonstrate a clear understanding and commitment to the Reformed view of worship, its rich heritage in music, and be able to incorporate the best of current musical offerings into services meaningfully.

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This part-time position (approx. 25 hours per week) requires a person who has a clear sense of calling to minister to youth. The ideal candidate will be involved in church education, pastoral care for young people, program development and implementation , and the administration of the church where it relates to youth and youth programs.

* Both the Music Director and Youth Director will be encouraged to seek continued training to maintain and increase confidence and effectiveness.
* These positions will be considered separately or in combination.
* An information package including complete job descriptions is available upon request.
* Application deadline is **October 15, 1998.**

Please forward resumes and/or inquiries to:
First Christian Reformed Church
Box 875, Barrie, ON L4M 4Y6
Attention: Caron Goodreau
(705) 734-9166 office/(705) 734-3785 fax

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Events

25th Anniversary

We, the congregation of **Smithville Chr. Ref. Church, Smithville, Ont.**, will be celebrating our 25th anniversary, the Lord willing, on **Sunday, Sept. 27, 1998.** A special time of praise and thanksgiving to God for His love and faithfulness will be held at our **10 a.m.** service. All former members and friends are welcome to join us for a time of fellowship and celebration. Refreshments will be served after the service.
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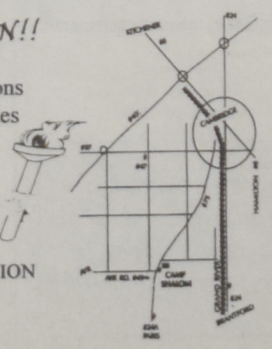

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CALL 519-623-4860

Church News

Christian Reformed Church

Anniversary:
— **New Life Chr. Ref. Church, Guelph, Ont.,** is celebrating its 10th anniversary on Sunday, Sept. 13, 1998. The celebration service is at 10:30 a.m., followed by a luncheon.

Send your questions to **Peter and Marja.** Confidentiality is assured.

Brock University Campus Ministries

Decew Residence * Brock University * L2S 3A1 * 905/688-5550 X 3134

Going to Brock University?
Stop by and say hello to the CRC chaplain, Peter Schuurman. He is located at Campus Ministries, Decew Residence 202, phone extension 3134, (home 684-4389, e-mail pschuurm@spartan.ac.brocku.ca). If you need help getting settled or are interested in getting involved in campus ministries, give him a call. Check out the Bible studies, book studies, prayer groups and cost suppers!

Classifieds

Events

Calendar of Events

Please submit only brief items. Placement is subject to space availability. Lengthy, multiple-event announcements will be rejected. We reserve the right to edit the material and to charge a nominal, per issue fee per item inserted.

Sept. 14 35th Anniversary Celebration, Brantford Chr. School, 7 Calvin St., **Brantford**, Ont. From 9:00 - 9:45 a.m. Everyone welcome! (#)

Sept. 19 Camp Shalom's 21st Annual Fall Fair, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m., at Camp Shalom, on Hwy. 24A, north of **Paris**, Ont. Info.: (519) 623-4860. (#)

Sept. 19 Praise & Worship Conference, 11.30 a.m. - 4 p.m., led by Colleen and Grace, at the Chr. Ref. Church, **Ancaster**, Ont. Sponsored by the Ancaster CRC. $10 registration (in advance, please). Public praise and worship at 7 p.m. open to all. Info.: Corrie Mulder at (905) 679-2296 or the church. (#)

Sept. 24-26 CLAC/WRF-sponsored conference exploring christian perspectives on shaping the workplace. At the Holiday Inn, **Burlington**, Ont. Plenary speakers: Don Posterski, Harry Antonides, Lee Hardy, Elwin Beukes and Marc Bacon. Free public presentation with Dr. John Bolt on Frid., Sept. 25, on: "Greed, Goodness, and God - Hope for Canada's Bottom Line." Info.: (905) 670-7386 or visit web page: www.interlog.com/~wrf/cwuf.htm

Sept. 25 Celebrating 40 years of Christ-centred education! At Wellandport Christian School, **Wellandport**, Ont. All former students, teachers, supporters and committee members are invited to attend a barbeque, open house and thanksgiving program from 4-10 p.m. Info.: (905) 386-6272. (#)

Sept. 26 Toronto District Chr. High School's 35th Anniversary Celebration Dinner! All friends of TDCH are invited to attend this event at TDCH, **Woodbridge**, Ont. Tickets $35. Info.: (905) 851-1772.

Oct. 4 Dutch worship service led by Rev. Jacob Kuntz, 3 p.m., CRC, 70 Hwy. 53 E., **Ancaster**, Ont.

Oct. 7 Anniversary Convention 1998, Can. Fed. of Chr. Ref. Women, 11 a.m. (note!), Redeemer College, **Ancaster**, Ont. Theme: "Great Is God's Faithfulness. " Speaker: Rev. J. Kuntz. Music: Redeemer Choir & students. Tickets: $20 each. Send stamped, self-addressed envelope with cheque (payable to Convention 1998), to P.O. Box 335, Grimsby, ON L3M 4H8 (#)

Oct. 11 First CRC, **Owen Sound**, Ont. celebrates its 50th anniversary! Variety program on Friday. Homecoming tea/dinner on Saturday. Special service on Sunday. Info.: Linda DeBoer at (519) 371-6192. (#)

Oct. 17 "A Day of Encouragement and Training" (for deacons, elders and other caregivers) at Hamilton District Chr. High School, **Ancaster**, Ont. Theme: "Follow the Way of Love!" Featuring 54 workshops, including special sessions for elders and caregivers. Also six workshops geared especially towards persons with a disability and their caregivers. Cost $40. Contact your deacons for a registration form, or call Diaconal Ministries at (905) 646-4511. (#)

Oct. 17 York Music Fest, featuring from Holland: Martin Zonnenberg (organist) and Marjolein de Wit (flutist), and from Canada: Willem van Suijdam (organist) and Heather Harpell (soloist), at 7:30 p.m., Maranatha CRC, **York**, Ont. Info.: (905)772-3700.

Oct. 17 "Break the Silence," a one-day conference to inform and educate people on the effects of pornography, presented with the support of the Alliston Christian community. From 8:15 a.m. to 5 p.m., at the Banting Memorial High School, 203 Victoria St., E., **Alliston**, Ont. For info. and to register call (705) 435-3893.

Oct. 18 Maranatha Chr. Ref. Church, **St. Catharines**, Ont., is celebrating "50 years of Chr. Ref. presence in the Niagara Peninsula." All former pastors, former members and friends are invited to attend a special thanksgiving service at 3:30 p.m. For info. call (905) 934-0631 or (905) 937-0314. (#)

Oct. 22-25 Organ Concert/Hymn Sing, with Dutch organist Sander van Marion , The Ottawa Carleton Male Choir (Brockville, Ottawa & Kingston) and brass musicians. **Oct. 22**: 8 p.m., First Presb. Church, **Brockville**, Ont.; **Oct. 23**: 8 p.m., St. Andrew's Presb. Church, **Ottawa**, Ont.; **Oct. 24**: 8 p.m., St. George's Cathedral, **Kingston**, Ont.; **Oct. 25**: 7:30 p.m., King St. United Church, **Trenton**, Ont. Free-will offering. Info.: (613) 224-1597. (#)

Nov. 6 Christian Festival Concert by the choirs and brass of the O.C.M.A., Leendert Kooij, director. Guest artists: Andre Knevel, Sander van Marion, Lisette Emmink, the Kooij sisters, and the Concert Band "Euphonia." At 8 p.m., Roy Thomson Hall, **Toronto**, Ont. Info./tickets: (416) 636-9779. (#)

Nov. 15 Dutch worship service led by Rev. John Klomps, 3 p.m., CRC, 70 Hwy. 53 E., **Ancaster**, Ont.

Nov. 27 Ebenezer CRC, **Jarvis**, Ont. will be celebrating 50 years of service to our God at 6:30 p.m. at the Community Centre, **Port Dover**, Ont. All former and present members are invited to attend. Info.: (519) 587-5069.

September is Awareness Month!

We'll be holding events and fundraising efforts to help those with neuromuscular disorders today while we search for tomorrow's cure. Please, call and donate. Because until there's a cure, there's us. 1 800 567-CURE

Muscular Dystrophy Association of Canada

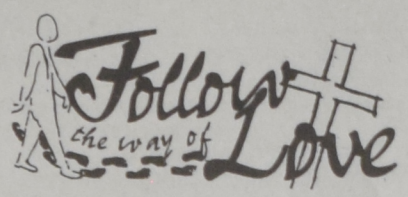
NC

Events

You are invited to...

A Day of Encouragement celebration and training

Saturday, October 17, 1998
Hamilton Christian High School, Ancaster, ON



Featuring:

- 54 workshops: for deacons, elders, pastors, caregivers and pastoral care workers and volunteers
- a mini-conference for persons with a disability and their caregivers
- Colleen and Grace to lead opening singing

Cost $40 (special group rate $35!)

NEW!

- dinner with guest speaker, John Suk, editor of *The Banner* *(additional cost $12)*

For registration forms, contact your deacons or Diaconal Ministries (905) 646-4511

Sponsored by Diaconal Ministries with the active support of the ministries and agencies of the CRC in Canada.

10 water smart moves for personal watercraft riders

(NC)—Here, courtesy of Bombardier Recreational Products and the Canadian Life Saving Society, are 10 personal watercraft safety tips:

1. Wear a life jacket (personal flotation device) at all times. It's required by law.
2. Boating and drinking don't mix.
3. Know your craft. Study the manufacturer's manual and practice handling your craft under qualified supervision in open water well away from other boaters.
4. Take a boating safety course to learn common boating rules, regulation and safe practices (visit www.seadoo.com on the Internet for contact information).
5. Ride defensively. Collisions with other boats or stationary objects, such as rafts and docks, are the leading cause of personal watercraft injuries.
6. Check the weather forecast before wave, wind and cloud changes that signal bad weather approaching.
7. Be prepared for cold conditions. Cold water absorbs body heat 25 times faster than cold air, so keep as much of your body out of the water as possible.
8. Know the area. Do not assume the water is clear of obstructions. Rocks, shoals, sandbars and submerged pilings can do serious damage to the craft and your body. Check marine charts and stay within marked channels.
9. Carry safety equipment, including a whistle, a tow rope, and, when riding on a large body of water, some small type B flares in a watertight container.
10. Don't ride at night. Most personal watercraft are not equipped with lights, which by law, are required for night riding.

- News Canada

First Christian hospital opened in China since 1949 communist takeover

Dan Wooding

DAYE CITY, China — What is believed to be the first Christian hospital to be opened in China since the Communist takeover of the country in 1949 has been announced by Rev. George Chen, a Chinese Christian leader who has spent 18 years in prison for his faith.

Chen say the PuAi Christian Hospital (PuAi means "Love to the World") is located in Daye City, Hubei Province, in central China, and has received the official blessing of the local municipality.

"This is a big miracle," said Chen, whose ministry in China is partly supported by ASSIST Ministries of Garden Grove, California. "The inaugural ceremony of the hospital took place in the Daye City congress hall on April 20 when the municipal public health bureau proclaimed that the Christian Hospital, which is under the local Daye church, had been upgraded from a clinic to a hospital."

'A dream come true'

Chen, as honorary hospital president, declared the facility open and addressed guests and church members. With the media covering his speech, he told the believers that they should "keep awake and pray more earnestly to support our hospital and church." He also appealed to the world for equipment, including a heart monitor and other emergency equipment, and funds to help run and further equip the hospital.

Chen said later, "I am excited and joy-filled because this hospital has been a dream of our local Christians for many years. I am also burdened that we will be able to rise to the challenge and I ask for prayer from Christians around the world for us."

Pastor Chen said that the Christians of Daye had been persecuted for years, but "their faithful witness has now brought them to a place of being highly respected and warmly accepted by the local people and authorities."

He said that the area now has 30,000 believers and 32 meeting points as well as a main church building in Baoan Township. "There are two ordained pastors in the area, three elders and eight full time evangelists ministering to over 30,000 believers."

Healing body and spirit

Chen explained that the hospital came about when the pastor of the Daye Church in Baoan, Rev. Xu, who is also a doctor, decided to continue practicing medicine as well as his ministerial duties. "He never ceased to see patients with great care, and as he did, he would also share with them the Good News that Jesus saves and [is] leading them to a faith in Christ," said Chen.

"In the late '80s, we invested a certain amount of funds to start a clinic inside the church compound. Today it has developed in combining traditional Chinese and Western medicine. Already this medical work has treated over 6,000 disease-stricken patients, including many suffering from various cancers. Over 3,000 utterly-destitute patients who were seriously ill, have been given free medical treatment."

Chen concluded, "Pastor Xu and our medical work have been widely praised by surrounding people and officials of all levels. God's almighty power and the Christians' daily life created this wonderful Christian hospital. It truly is a great miracle!"

Chinese government, China-watchers present conflicting reports

Alan Doerksen

ST. CATHARINES, Ont. — Observers of Christianity from inside and outside China are giving conflicting reports about the church's levels of freedom and growth in that country.

Dr. Jonathan Chao, one veteran China-watcher, says he believes the openness of the Chinese people to the gospel will last another five to 10 years, reports Compass.

Churches still growing

For some time now, those involved in China ministry have been concerned at the rise of materialism in China, as the country opens its markets and the opportunities to make money increase. However, the rate of church growth has not slowed in the last two years, despite increased persecution levels and the nationwide pressure for house churches to register.

Chao estimates the house church population to be roughly between 70-80 million. He asserts that the most urgent need of the church in China today is "pastoral training," and says that many of China's churches are struggling to provide financial support for their pastors and workers.

But the leader of China's official Protestant Three-Self church, Luo Guanzhong, says China has only 10 million Christians, and most are registered with the Three-Self Church, reports the *Religion Today' online news service.*

COMPASS DIRECT PHOTOS

Pastor Samuel Lam, a Chinese house church leader.

Most China-watchers and house church leaders within China disagree with Luo. "We have hundreds of thousands of Christians in this city, but only eight Three-Self places of worship," says a Beijing house church leader. Many observers believe Christians in China number between 40 and 80 million, reports *Religion Today.* Pastor Samuel Lam, a house church leader, says the Three-Self organization pretends most Christians are registered with them so they can receive and control the distribution of foreign aid.

Luo lambasts critics

Luo has lashed out at critics who maintain that the state-sponsored church hampers rather than fosters numerical growth, says Compass Direct News. The state church "is not established by the Chinese government to restrain the development of Christianity in China," said Luo in a July 10 article in an English-language Chinese daily newspaper.

Chinese Premier Zhu Rongi has also defended his government's treatment of Christians and their faith. Recently, Zhu assured Pat Robertson that religious freedom exists in China, reports *Religion Today.* Robertson, chairman of the Christian Broadcasting Network, is currently touring the country.

China has been fair in its religious policies, although some officials have at times been extreme in pursuing illegal activities, such as house church worship, said the Chinese leader. "We have historically recognized the role of religion in social development," said Zhu. "Those who believe in religion and atheists alike believe that people should enjoy spiritual strength." He added that Christianity is relatively new to the country, and that Taoism, Buddhism and Confucianism have been prevalent for 2000 years.

But what's the meaning of 'relatively new'? According to a recent CC article by Bert Den Boggende on early missions to China (Aug. 21, page 12), the first known appearance of Christianity in China dates from the year 635.

News Digest

'Free Willy' soon to be free

OREGON — Keiko, the killer whale star of the movie *Free Willy,* will soon be swimming freely in the open ocean. On Sept. 9, the U.S. Air Force flew Keiko from Oregon to Iceland, near where he was captured in 1979. The whale flew in a special tank aboard a C-17 cargo plane to the floating pen that awaits him in Iceland. The private Free Willy Keiko Foundation will pay the $300,000 cost of the move, said a spokesperson.

The 20-year-old whale has spent most of his life in captivity, much of it in a cramped tank in a Mexico City amusement park. Last January, Keiko was brought from Mexico City to the Oregon Coast Aquarium, severely underweight after a decade in the overly warm amusement park.

Officials say it may be months or years before Keiko can fend on his own in the chilly North Atlantic, the *Globe and Mail* reports.

It's a bird..., a plane... a skater?

VANCOUVER (CP) — An in-line skater is fuming after police fined him $75 for speeding in Stanley Park. Jeff MacDougall, a university student, said he was on an in-line skating path when he apparently went through a speed trap set for vehicles. Police said he was going 22 km per hour in a 15 km/h zone. MacDougall plans to fight the ticket in court.

Hamster's death greatly exaggerated

LONDON, U.K. — Kevin the hamster, whose 'death' in a Levi's jeans TV commercial produced a flood of complaints, is alive and well and considering a career in show business, reports the *Globe and Mail.*

Britain's television watchdog agency had more than 400 complaints about the ad, in which a hamster dies of boredom after his exercise wheel breaks. It was part of Levi's new brand concept: "Expect the unexpected."

Kevin's owners assured viewers a stuffed look-alike was used for the scene, and that Kevin has been inundated with offers of work.